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JTPA: Program Design Options for At-Risk Youth



A Technical Assistance and Training Series

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**A GUIDE TO
PROGRAM DESIGN OPTIONS FOR SERVING
AT-RISK YOUTH**

**A COMPANION PIECE TO THE
PROGRAM OPTIONS TOOL-KIT FOR AT-RISK YOUTH**

prepared for the

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION**

by the

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FOREWORD

The U.S. Department of Labor is sponsoring a series of subject-specific train-the-trainer workshops in support of the implementation of the JTPA Amendments of 1992. These workshops represent the initial offerings of the capacity building network as authorized by the Amendments. In most cases, the Technical Assistance Guides (TAGs) and training materials that form the foundation for each workshop are based on research conducted by training contractors, under DOL sponsorship. The workshop training activities present key findings of the research that can be applied to the JTPA system and reinforce practical skills related to the TAGs.

This Technical Assistance Guide (TAG), is a companion piece to the **Program Design Options Tool Kit for At-Risk Youth**. This publication is one in a series of guides that has been developed to facilitate turnaround training at the state and local level. In addition to this workshop, other workshop topics in the series include:

- » **Assessment:** Issues addressed include information necessary to design client assessment and individual Service Strategies. Also discussed are self-evaluation of assessment practices, alternative organizational structures for assessment components, and selection of appropriate assessment methods and instruments.
- » **Case Management:** Issues discussed include case management at the client and systems levels.
- » **SDA Monitoring of Service Providers:** Issues discussed include procedures and instruments for use by SDAs in monitoring contractors or service providers. Emphasis is on program quality for nine service activities and compliance requirements for general financial management and payroll.
- » **Targeting, Outreach and Recruitment:** Issues discussed include effective tools for planning, evaluating and conducting targeting, outreach and recruitment activities at the SDA level. Also discussed are the best practice methods and techniques, names of knowledgeable persons and clarifications of related portions of the Act and regulations.
- » **On-The Job Training (OJT):** Issues discussed include developing quality OJT programs that are competency driven, have measurable outcomes, and meet the longterm needs of the participant. Also addressed are implications of the amendments on the OJT program design.
- » **State Oversight:** Training for State staff responsible for JTPA oversight is based on two technical assistance guides. One guide concerns program compliance requirements and the other focuses on monitoring SDAs program quality.

The training manuals, in conjunction with the Trainer's Primer, provide a basis for developing training tailored to the needs of the State and SDA personnel. Users are encouraged to adapt the materials presented and incorporate their experience and their expertise into subsequent turnaround training provided at the State and local level.

PART ONE

THE CHANGING CONTEXT FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges facing employment and training practitioners today is that of increasing services to at-risk youth. With the passage of the JTPA Amendments and the growing concern about the long-term employability of both youth and adults now in the workforce, local programs are being asked to focus their efforts on those youth who are most at risk of long-term un/under-employment, particularly those youth who have significant barriers to regular employment.

At-risk youth, whether they are in-or-out-of-school, bring a complex and often demanding mix of needs and characteristics to education or employability programs. Developing program designs and services that can meet these needs requires careful planning and attention. At the same time, the demands of employers and the workplace are rapidly changing. In order to meet these demands and prepare program participants for real jobs and long-term employability, practitioners need to build opportunities to learn new skills into their programs and to examine new strategies for teaching and learning.

Taken together, the needs of in-and-out-of-school youth and the requirements of employers provide the "inputs" into both program design and community planning decisions. It is by gathering information and examining those issues that communities can begin to ask well-thought-out questions about the "outputs"--i.e. what programs can do for youth, which "program model" is most appropriate given local circumstances and what other players and resources will be needed to deliver the programs and services. This first section will provide practitioners and policy makers with a number of compelling reasons for taking a more reflective look at youth programming.

CHANGES IN THE JTPA AMENDMENTS

The current policy context makes it especially timely to take a fresh look at how we serve in-and-out-of-school youth. The recently approved JTPA amendments target both in-school and out-of-school youth with serious barriers to employment (e.g., homeless, runaway, parenting) and continue the thrust towards a longer-term, competency-based, outcome-oriented, employability development agenda that includes elements such as skills acquisition, meaningful work experience and strong linkages between learning and work.

In point of fact the primary impetus for this guide comes from the passage of the 1992 Amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).¹ The 1992 Amendments require that at least 50% of the young people served by JTPA be out-of-school youth and that 65% of all youth served face significant barriers to long-term employability.

For many SDAs these requirements call for a substantial change in program direction. Over the past few years, as the Department of Labor has increased its emphasis on basic skills development and long-term employability, growing numbers of SDAs have focused their efforts on younger, in-school youth. For some SDAs, this has been a response to the difficulties of recruiting and retaining out-of-school youth; in-school youth represent a relatively accessible population. But the shift toward serving in school youth also reflected a new emphasis on early intervention and dropout prevention as critical elements in an effective "at risk" youth strategy. For these SDAs, the requirement to serve substantial numbers of out-of-school youth means, at the very least, expanding existing out-of-school programs, and, in many cases, learning a whole new set of strategies and building new relationships in the community.

For other SDAs, service to youth has long been seen as an adjunct to the operation of their adult training programs. Young people who entered the system were placed in adult programs with few provisions for addressing any special needs that they might bring as adolescents. For these SDAs, the requirement to serve substantial numbers of out-of-school youth is also likely to prompt a reevaluation of current programs and the development of strategies and linkages that are more appropriate to a younger population. One of the purposes of this Guide, then, is to provide policy makers, planners and program operators with new information as they rethink their options for meeting the Job Training Partnership Act's new goals for in-and-out of school youth.

CHANGING ASSUMPTIONS:

While the JTPA Amendments encourage a reexamination of current programs, so too does the changing context for youth employment and training services. Where once the major program emphasis was on providing work experience or job search skills aimed at quickly moving young people into **employment**, the emphasis today is increasingly on the development of the basic and work skills needed for **long-term employability**. As a result of the *America's Choice* study, the SCANS Commission report and others, the focus of most employability development strategies has shifted towards stronger skills-based education and a more serious integration of work and learning.

¹ The Job Training Reform Amendments of 1992, Public Law 102-367, September 7, 1992

The results of a series of national demonstrations have also begun to point clearly away from single strategy interventions and towards more comprehensive approaches that combine basic skills education, work experience or training, pre-employment skills, and support services into an integrated, "holistic" approach to the issues of employability. In this context as well, our guide provides an opportunity for even experienced practitioners to take a new look at their community's programs and assess their interventions in light of current and future labor market requirements.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE LABOR MARKET

Social and economic contexts provide additional impetus for a reflective look at youth programming. Demographics clearly show that *the youth cohort is shrinking*, and is increasingly composed of minority and disadvantaged young people. As one relates the realities of the demographics with *the changes in the labor market, i.e. demands for higher skill levels*, even for entry-level employees, the necessity of providing effective and outcome oriented youth programming becomes very clear. The on-going nature of these intertwined issues makes it imperative to assess present programs to determine their basic efficacy in promoting long-term employability for the most vulnerable young people.

While the needs and characteristics of in-and-out-of-school youth help to determine the **types and intensity of services** needed, the demands of the labor market essentially determine the **content and goals** of any program or system of services.

EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES: PARTNERS CHANGING ROLES

Education has been a central institutional partner as SDA's have grappled with how best to serve in-school youth and how to link systems such that young dropouts don't "fall through the cracks." The education field has experienced changes in demands and expectations, as well. For example, the momentum created by the national education goals - with emphases on early intervention, academic rigor, increased graduation rates and school system accountability -- has created a greater interest in and focus on outcomes and on skills-based curricula. In addition, the interest in partnerships and on providing or accessing a greater range of community services has provided impetus for reflection and change within educational institutions.

In human services, the passage of the Family Support Act (the JOBS legislation, in particular) has forced a resurgence of interest in case management and community-based, integrated services. Many of these changes --in education and human services -- have resulted in greater commonality of interest across institutions, i.e. questions of how to better serve individuals with multiple needs in an economy of scarce resources. And, in addition, how to design comprehensive services which embody high expectations for clients and teach skills people need to be self-sufficient and well functioning adults. These shared challenges clearly illustrate that no one institution can "do the job alone." At the same time, they imply greater potential for developing inter-institutional partnerships and to improved ways of "doing business."

ORGANIZATION/ PURPOSE OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

This TAG (Technical Assistance Guide) is designed as a companion piece to Brandeis' recently developed Program Design Tool-kit for "At-Risk" Youth which will be made available to participants involved in the train-the-trainer Institutes funded through the Department of Labor. The TAG synthesizes the major themes involved in youth program design and "walks through" the basic components of youth program planning and implementation.

The TAG is comprised of six units:

Part I emphasizes to planners and practitioners the basic message of program design -- that youth services need to be restructured in ways that are more responsive to client, rather than institutional needs. This section also emphasizes that the needs of clients within most youth serving organizations have changed over the past ten years.

Part Two provides a discussion of the changing needs of the labor market and the implications of the issues of client demographics and the emerging needs of the labor force. This unit explains the need to help clients of education/employment and training programs gain skills, particularly higher order skills in order to improve long term employability; and suggests that programs/youth service providers and area businesses will need to prepare themselves for greater diversity in the future work force.

Part Three presents in more detail basic design elements for creating successful youth programs -- teaching basic skills, developing work skills and creating good supportive services.

Part Four expands the discussion of design elements by providing a framework of essential principles for both planning and implementation phases of program design. The principles are drawn from a synthesis of youth research done by Brandeis as part of the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project. Each principle is discussed and illustrated in this section. In addition, practical assessment checklists are provided for program planners.

Part Five discusses program design options for serving both in- and out-of-school youth. Particularly important here is the point that planners look beyond stand-alone program models for possible replication and begin to see programs as examples of different service options. Exploring the advantages and trade-offs of each option in terms of a local youth and employability development needs can help community stakeholders plan and fund programs that truly meet local circumstances.

Part Six includes a discussion of lessons learned from cities which have attempted to move beyond discrete programming to create community-wide youth partnerships focusing on employability development. The political and technical problems of these complex partnerships are presented in this final section of the guide.

PART TWO

CHARACTERISTICS OF AT-RISK YOUTH IN THE NINETIES

INTRODUCTION

For program planners and policy makers, the starting point for the design of any employment and training program is a clear understanding of the needs and skills of potential program participants and an equally clear understanding of the fundamental skill and behavioral requirements of employers. At both the program and the community or "systems" level, these two elements -- who you are going to serve and what outcomes you need to achieve -- set the context for determining what kinds of programs are needed in the community and the mix of services appropriate for each individual program.

To design effective programs, we need to be clear about who we are serving and what kinds of skills we are trying to teach. In and out-of-school youth bring a complex mix of characteristics to any employment and training program: needs for skills development, limited work experience, struggles with motivation or self-esteem. In addition, the practical needs for child care, transportation, or counseling, as well as the other pressing needs accompanying this critical developmental period of young people's lives present challenges to service providers. Yet these young people also bring with them a rich array of differing experiences and talents which can enrich both youth programs and the larger community.

To serve these youth effectively, policy makers and planners need to recognize their common needs as well as the variations and differences among youth. They then must either carefully target their programs or build the capacity to address multiple needs into program designs. The following discussion reviews further the characteristics of young people most likely to be served through JTPA.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

It is much easier to describe the characteristics of dropout prone youth than it is to chart the scope of the dropout problem. Statistics on school dropouts are notoriously unreliable, as different school systems count and report this information in many different ways. Yet we know that dropouts come inordinately from poor families or poor neighborhoods. The Children's Defense Fund reports that "achievement levels, school completion rates and rates of high school graduates' entry into higher education for low-income and minority students lag behind those of more advantaged children".² Youth from poor families are three to

²Children's Defense Fund. Leave No Child Behind: An Opinion Maker's Guide to Children In Election Year 1992. CDF, 1991.

four times more likely to drop out than those from more affluent households.³ The following statistics give a clearer understanding of the situation facing many of these young people:

- » A frequently cited statistic is that one in four young people fails to graduate with age mates. The Children's Defense Fund (1991) states that 400,000 young people ages 16-19 dropped out of school during the 1989-1990 school year. CDF claims that, in the next four years, 1,620,000 young people ages 16-24 will fail to complete high school.
- » Hispanics have among the highest of dropout rates: in 1988, only 55 percent of Latino young adults (18-24) were high school graduates. (Children's Defense Fund, 1991).
- » Urban youth drop out in higher numbers than those in suburban communities, although rural youth are also at higher risk of dropping out.

Yet despite these numbers, overall school completion rates are now considerably better than they were 30 years ago -- current estimates range from 78 to 80 percent. However, the consequences of dropping out, both for individuals and for society, have worsened considerably. Earnings for young people who left school before graduating fell by more than 25 percent (adjusted for inflation) over the past three decades. And the social costs resulting from youth who drop out -- increased welfare and health services, criminal justice and lost tax revenues -- total \$77 billion dollars each year. (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1989)

One may well wonder why young people drop out given these dire consequences. Much of the literature points to an accumulation of unsuccessful or painful experiences which eventually undermines a young person's commitment to school (Wehlage and Rutter, 1976). Surveys of young people indicate that they drop out for a variety of reasons -- employment, marriage, pregnancy, family responsibilities -- yet school related reasons are most frequently cited as reasons for leaving. The National Center for Education Statistics found that 66 percent of students who drop out do so because they do not like school or because of poor grades. In addition, data show sizeable racial disparities in the schools factors related to dropping out -- grade retention (the single best predictor), suspension/expulsion, academic ability grouping (tracking) and course failure (Metis, 1992).⁴

³Massachusetts Department of Education. Changing Schools and Communities: A Systemic Approach to Dropout Prevention. November 1989.

⁴Metis, Associates, Inc. New Futures Initiative: Cohorts and Comparative Data Report, Pittsburgh, PA. April 1992.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AT-RISK YOUTH

What are the needs and characteristics of out-of-school youth? The simple answer is: "diverse." Under the broad definitions of the Job Training Partnership Act, out-of-school includes any economically disadvantaged youth aged 16 to 21. The population includes young men and women who have dropped out of school quite recently and high school graduates (particularly those with limited basic skills); youth with limited or no work experience, and some whose basic skills may be poor, but have learned to hold a steady job. Given the age range, some out-of-school youth may be youngsters entering adolescence while others may be relatively adult with years of independence behind them. They may be single parents or the children of single parent families; motivated and ready to achieve, or frustrated and disillusioned and lacking a real sense of future opportunities.

While the individual variations may be substantial, by most measures the majority of economically disadvantaged out-of-school youth represent a significantly "at risk" population. In each of three critical areas -- basic skills, work experience, and the need for supports -- they are likely to demonstrate a relatively low level of skills and a substantial set of barriers to program participation and employment. In determining the range of services that needs to be offered and the intensity of the program strategy, each of these characteristics needs to be taken into consideration. Finally, in developing strategies for out-of-school youth, age always needs to be considered as a critical factor. In many ways it is the fact that out-of-school youth are *youth* that is the most important defining characteristic, and the differences between youth and adults, and between younger and older youth can play a major role in choices of service mix and program design.

Basic Skills

Perhaps the most consistent defining characteristic for out-of-school youth is poor basic educational skills. Currently, some 40% of the JTPA eligible out-of-school youth in the United States are high school dropouts, a proportion nearly four times that of the youth population as a whole, and most of those young people demonstrate basic skills well below the average for more advantaged populations.⁵

⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office. *Job Training Partnership Act: Youth Participant Characteristics, Services, and Outcomes*, (Washington: United States General Accounting Office, January 1990).

Addressing School Failure

Perhaps more important, however, the high proportion of out-of-school youth with poor basic skills also highlights the need to provide an *alternative* educational approach. For young dropouts and those with poor basic skills, their experience in the traditional education system has been one of repeated failure. Most will have experienced years of poor grades and many will have been retained in grade at least once and possibly more often. For these young people, a traditional classroom environment represents nothing so much as more of the same. In order for these youth to learn, programs have to provide a new and different approach to learning.⁶

Work Skills/Experience

While employers are increasingly emphasizing an understanding of the work place and "work maturity," it is also clear that relatively few out-of-school youth served by JTPA are likely to have any real experience with working. According to the 1990 GAO report on the characteristics of JTPA youth participants, less than 20% of the country's JTPA-eligible youth report any recent work experience. Among 15-17 year old JTPA participants, 86% lack a significant work history; for 18-21 year old participants the figure was a still substantial 70% report lacking recent work experience.⁷

The Need for Support

While the levels of basic skills and work skills of out-of-school youth represent the key elements of employability (and hence the content focus of any employability program), the success of any program in retaining its participants is directly related to its capacity to provide the personal and social supports that out-of-school often need. For many out-of-school youth, school failure and unemployment represent just a few of the array of barriers to program participation and employability. Berlin and Sum have argued, for example, that youth with poor basic skills are eight times more likely to become teen parents than those youth with above average skills and four times more likely to become welfare dependent. Other researchers have suggested that school dropouts are likely to have a higher incidence of substance abuse and experience some form of delinquency or arrest. Young dropouts are more likely to come from single parent families than high school graduates and may, as a consequence, lack consistent role models or parental support. And most, by definition, are poor and struggling with the ongoing issues of housing and transportation. While the

⁶ The characteristics of dropouts are summarized in Sherman, *Dropping Out of School*; Andrew Hahn and Jacqueline Danzberger, *Dropouts in America; Enough is Known for Action* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1987); also Joy Dryfoos, *Adolescents At Risk: Prevalence and Prevention* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁷ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Job Training Partnership Act: Youth Participant Characteristics, Services, and Outcomes*.

majority of young dropouts are white and live outside the inner city, the incidence of dropping out is substantially higher among young black men and for urban youth. Consequently, a relatively high proportion of those populations are at risk.⁸

The following exhibit includes a number of case studies of both in-and out-of-school youth. We include them in the TAG in order to encourage youth service planners to focus first on the characteristics, strengths and needs of participants as a way to both design new programs and make current services more relevant. The point stemming from an exercise such as this is a simple one. While in and out-of-school youth may vary substantially, many youth likely to be served in employment and training programs face multiple barriers to participation and employment. Joy Dryfoos recently estimated that as many as half of all adolescents (ages 10-17) are at some degree of risk from behaviors such as delinquency, early pregnancy, substance abuse, and dropping out; an estimated 25% are at "high" or "very high" risk in her formulation. While not every participant will be a teen parent or homeless, program planners need to gain a solid understanding of the issues involved for those who are if they are to serve them effectively. Without access to appropriate supportive services - child care, family and psychological counseling, assistance with welfare, transportation, and intensive daily support, few of those "most at risk" are likely to persist in a program long enough to succeed.

⁸ Berlin and Sum, *Toward a More Perfect Union*; Dryfoos, *Adolescents at Risk*; Sherman, *Dropping Out of School*.

JULIA

Julia is fifteen and a ninth grader. She has been an adequate student throughout school, getting mostly C's in general education courses. According to school records, she functions about two grades behind the average for her high school classmates, or at about the seventh grade level. She has worked as a babysitter since she was twelve, but has no other work experience. She lives with her mother, an LPN who works nights since she and Julia's father divorced three years ago.

Julia has always been, according to her mother, "a good girl, but shy...until now." She has just announced that she is pregnant. She thinks she will drop out of school when she "starts to show", have her baby and live at home. She will not identify the father, although she has really only been keeping company with one boy in the past few months, a junior in a neighboring high school.

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LETITIA

Letitia is a ninth-grader, fifteen years old. She was an average student in middle school, but seems to be having a tough time in her first year of high school. She has missed thirty days of school already (in half a year) and when she is in school, she is often seen wandering the halls during class. Having always done well academically, she is likely to fail the ninth grade.

The youngest of six children, she has lived with both parents all her life. Her mother went to work two years ago as a clerk in a grocery store, and works an irregular schedule. Her father was injured on the job and returned to work four years ago on a partial disability. Letitia has grown up physically in the past two years. She is tall, very attractive and has been mistaken for an adult. She is also very well-spoken and polite, not at all hostile and angry. She is very uncertain of herself around adult males -- appearing timid and afraid.

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HECTOR

Hector is seventeen. He dropped out of school two years ago after repeating the ninth grade unsuccessfully. When last tested, Hector read at the fifth grade level but could not do either multiplication or division. He never held a real job, either summer or part-time, though last year he worked half the summer for a landscaping company owned by a neighbor.

He is alternately charming and angry, and very verbal, bilingual in English and Spanish, but really can neither read nor write in either language. He has had several minor scrapes with the law, and spent thirty days a year ago in a youth detention center. He has not seen his father since he was eight. His mother works "off the books" as a domestic, and receives AFDC for Hector and his two younger siblings. He lives "around", with friends, sometimes on the streets, occasionally at home for a week or two at a time.

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ROBERTA

Roberta is nineteen. She dropped out of school when she was sixteen because she was, in her words, "running around with a bad crowd." During that time she got pregnant and now she has a two year old boy who has some developmental problems. Roberta ignored that pregnancy for some time, drank and smoked and did not seek pre-natal care. Roberta receives AFDC and her mother helps out with the care of her son. She lives at home but would like to be on her own. She works part-time in a fast food restaurant. Roberta reads at an 11th grade level, has 6th grade math skills, but few high school credits. She says she is more serious now about her choice of friends and about her life. She has a steady boyfriend. She wants a place of her own and wants to provide for her child. Her biggest worry these days, however, is that she may be pregnant again.

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PART THREE

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

Taken together, the characteristics of in-and-out-of-school youth and the requirements of the labor market provide a context and a framework for decision-making about the types of program strategies that may be most appropriate for a community and the types of services that are required. On the one hand, the growing concerns over the skill deficiencies of in-and out-of-school youth and changes in employer requirements has led to a new emphasis on basic skills and combining work and learning in program design. Virtually all of the approaches considered appropriate today incorporate a substantial emphasis on basic skills.

At the same time, practitioners are beginning to change the way they think about who they are serving and how their programs and services are structured and organized. Traditionally, communities have defined the in-and-out-of-school population, and youth generally, in terms of demographic characteristics -- dropouts, teen parents, minority, etc. - - and have organized programs around services to particular target groups. Increasingly, however, practitioners are defining the needs of their participants in terms of levels of employability -- that is, an individual's mix of basic skills and/or pre-employment and work maturity skills -- and have begun to design and organize their programs to address specific levels of employability. This outcome-based approach (often referred to as the "multi-tiered" approach) is designed to roughly match the needs of the young people being served with appropriate programs and services.⁹

What the multi-tiered approach suggests on the program level is the need to look at how the mix of services in any particular strategy match the needs of the young people the program is intended to serve. It would be appropriate to look at programs in terms of the following characteristics of in-and-out-of-school youth and how these characteristics affect program design.

⁹ The multi-tiered approach is described in a number of publications from the Center for Human Resources. For a general description, see "Working It Out: Performance Management Strategies for Increasing Services to At-Risk Youth" in *Youth Programs*, Winter/Spring, 1989. For a description of the development of a multi-tiered system by a group of Michigan SDAs, see "Focusing on Employability: The Michigan Employment Skills System," in *Youth Programs*, Summer, 1991.

Basic Skills

There are a number of implications to be drawn from the figures on basic skills among JTPA youth. The first, of course, is the critical importance of basic educational skills in any employability development program for out-of-school youth. According to an ETS study, those individuals scoring at the lowest literacy level are likely to find "the most severe restrictions on full participation in our increasingly complex society;" even individuals scoring at slightly higher levels (level 2) would "still probably be limited in their full participation in society."

On a national basis, the employment figures for school dropouts and young people with low basic skills tend to confirm this. Throughout the 1980s, employment rates for youth 18-24 who had completed high school have run 45-60% higher than those for school dropouts. Dropouts are more likely to experience more frequent bouts of unemployment and have substantially lower annual and lifetime earnings than high school and college graduates. Berlin and Sum have also shown that young adults (aged 20-23) with poor basic skills tend to earn substantially less than those whose test scores indicate higher skill levels.¹⁰

Program Design Implications:

Programs might vary in focus and intensity from one-to-one tutoring for basic literacy education to worksite or computer-based remediation and/or GED instruction, to teaching of functional basic skills in conjunction with occupational training.

Work Skills

In order for young people to begin to build the work-related skills and experience needed for employability, they need to have an opportunity to gain experience working under some form of close supervision. At the same time, it is equally important to recognize that, for many of these young people, joining the world of work (or regular program participation) calls for a significant shift in attitudes and behaviors. In the words of one evaluation report, this kind of initial work experience "is more than just a job or an entry to the job market; it is a substantial change in the lives of the participants and in their attitudes towards others." Some young people, another report noted, have simply never had to be organized and ready to work and may need substantial advice and handholding, as well as instruction. They "may never have had exposure to calendars, alarm clocks, bulletin boards, and all the paraphernalia that are commonplace in a working household. In-and-out-of-school youth may also have no role models who exemplify the kinds of behaviors associated with

¹⁰ Employment statistics from U.S. Department of Education, *Youth Indicators, 1991: Trends in the Well-Being of American Youth*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1991), Tables 38, 39. Also see, Joel D. Sherman, *Dropping Out of School. Causes and Consequences for Male and Female Youth* (vol. I), (Washington, D.C. Prepared for the U.S. Department of Education by Pelavin Associates, Inc., 1987) and Gordon Berlin and Andrew Sum, *Toward a More Perfect Union*. (New York: Ford Foundation, 1988).

successful employment, such as adhering to schedules, reporting of absences, workplace dress and behavior, and so on." For these young people, learning about work in a first-hand, hands-on manner can be as important and challenging as improving their basic skills.¹¹

Program Design Implications: Young people learn about teamwork and task accomplishment through occupational skills training focused on specific jobs. They gain experience working under some form of close supervision with substantial advice and instruction and the advantages of adult role modeling.

Services/Program Design Must Reflect the Needs of Youth

The characteristics of young clients show us that the focus and structure of programs for in- and out-of-school youth need to differ significantly from that for adults. In the words of a recent review of youth and employment research:

Unlike adults, youth coming to second-chance programs are undergoing the psychological, emotional and social development that is an inherent part of the passage through adolescence. Negotiating the transition from school to the labor market requires more than the acquisition of skills specific to any occupation. It is also necessary for youth to master the developmental tasks associated with achieving the cognitive, emotional, and social maturity that is critical to long-term stable employment.¹²

Different program designs will provide different mixes of basic skills, work experiences, and supportive services. But in general, programs that work for those least job ready are those that provide the most intensive services. Those appropriate for the most job ready focus much more carefully and specifically on occupational training and the specific skills needed to move from training to employment.

¹¹ Robinson Hollister, Jr., Peter Kemper, Rebecca A. Maynard, *The National Supported Work Demonstration*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); and Janet C. Quint and James A. Riccio, *The Challenge of Serving Pregnant and Parenting Teens: Lessons from Project Redirection*. (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1985).

¹² Thomas J. Smith and Michelle Alberti Gambone, "Effectiveness of Federally Funded Employment Training Strategies for Youth," in *Dilemmas in Youth Employment Programming: Findings from the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project*, (Washington: D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 1992).

Program Design Implications: Approaches can vary in intensity and comprehensiveness, from an individualized "wrap around" program strategy, providing a range of on-site services and individual case management, to a more limited set of supports and a less intensive set of referrals and case management.

Planning for Workforce Diversity

With the trend towards an increasingly diverse workforce, program planners need to be aware of how important it is for the young people involved and the supervisors alike to value each others different races/cultures. This calls for discussion and careful planning around diversity issues, for example, how to skillfully build teamwork and appreciation for differing work and cultural styles through program activities. Also, important is being able to introduce young people into less diverse work cultures in ways that are sensitive, positive and productive for young people and employers alike.

Program Design Implications: Programs can build awareness and appreciation of other races and cultures through curriculum, instruction and program activities, such as community service projects. Employment and Training professionals who recruit and prepare staff and worksite supervisors may build diversity issues into their training programs.

PART THREE

ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR EMPLOYABILITY

A number of recent studies and commission reports have highlighted the need to adequately prepare the nation's workforce with basic employability skills. Since young people entering the workforce today need to adapt to changes in the workplace, are the young people you serve being taught the following skills and qualities? Does your program provide them with the means to acquire these skills?

CHECKLIST:

Developing Identified Seven Key Workplace Skill Groups:

- _____ Learning How To Learn
- _____ Basic Competency Skills: Reading, Writing and Computation
- _____ Communication Skills: Speaking and Listening Effectively
- _____ Adaptability Skills: Solving Problems and Thinking Creatively
- _____ Developmental Skills: Managing Personal and Professional Growth
- _____ Groups Effectiveness Skills: Working With Others
- _____ Influencing Skills: Making A Difference

Five competencies of skills and personal qualities that are needed for solid job performance:

- _____ Resources-identifies, organizes, plans and allocates resources;
- _____ Interpersonal-works with others;
- _____ Information-acquires and uses;
- _____ Systems-understands complex inter-relations; and
- _____ Technology-works with a variety of technologies

Three part foundation of skills and personal qualities that are needed for a solid job performance:

- _____ Basic Skills-reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks;
- _____ Thinking Skills-thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, and reason;
- _____ Personal Qualities-displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty.

<p style="text-align: center;">PART FOUR BASIC DESIGN ELEMENTS PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION</p>

INTRODUCTION

Good program design involves planning, implementation and evaluation phases. Hence, we have organized this discussion into two sections in order to more thoroughly discuss planning and implementation. Because evaluation runs through both phases and is an ongoing process, we have not broken out separate evaluation elements. Practitioners need to incorporate evaluation into every phase of program design and implementation, as well as develop an overall evaluation plan. It is also important to note planning elements do not stop with the onset of implementation but are ongoing and active throughout implementation and evaluation. In addition, each implementation element requires upfront planning.

The following discussion gives planners and practitioners a big picture of each strategy and then breaks down the strategies by component elements. Each planning element is presented and then discussed in the context of how to go about implementing that particular element. The following two pages offer a concise look at each planning element and the what it will take to implement each planning element. It is important to make several notes at the outset of this discussion.

- » The elements, by and large were drawn from research synthesized through the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project, a three year venture funded by the Department of Labor and managed by Brandeis University with their partner, Public/Private Ventures.
- » The elements are by no means exhaustive. We present them in this way in order to provide a practical framework for understanding how important elements fit together and contribute to program design.
- » In addition, the framework suggests a way of organizing, sequencing and managing change as planners put in place a particular strategy.
- » The latter portion of this section provides an overview of the decision-making tasks inherent in designing effective youth programs. It summarizes the steps and major considerations involved in creating programs that serve young people effectively.

PLANNING ELEMENTS

Planning Element #1:	Serving Youth as Youth
Planning Element #2:	Defining Outcomes
Planning Element #3:	Fostering Relationships With Caring Skilled Adults
Planning Element #4:	Linking Work and Learning
Planning Element #5:	Providing Quality Work Experiences
Planning Element #6:	Providing Supportive Services
Planning Element #7:	Increasing Motivation
Planning Element #8:	Involving the Community
Planning Element #9:	Funding
Planning Element #10:	Budgeting

IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENTS

Implementation Element #1:	Creating a Supportive Environment
Implementation Element #2:	Developing Worksites
Implementation Element #3:	Implementing an Effective Assessment System
Implementation Element #4:	Making Connection Between Work & Learning Clear, On-going and Explicit
Implementation Element #5:	Acquiring "Real Life" Skills
Implementation Element #6:	Fostering A Sense of Engagement
Implementation Element #7:	Connecting Young Person To Needed Services
Implementation Element #8:	Curriculum and Instruction
Implementation Element #9:	Investing in Staff Development and Training

PLANNING ELEMENT #1: SERVING YOUTH AS YOUTH

Underlying every element is the clear understanding that youth are not adults. Though many youth are served in adult programs, at-risk youth, especially younger adolescents differ sharply from most adults in terms of their learning styles and developmental needs. While adult learners are often characterized as relatively independent, self-directed, goal-oriented and problem-centered -- able to soon take responsibility for their own learning -- adolescents are often characterized in much the opposite way. As adolescents, they are often in the midst of exploring and defining their own values, goals and identity. One moment they are trying out an aspect of what they perceive adults to be as they attempt to build a mature picture of themselves. The next moment, they may resort to childish behavior because they have not yet broken free of the patterns of childhood or reached an adult level of functioning. They cannot be regarded as children -- many already have acquired adult responsibilities -- but they are not yet adults. Though rapidly gaining the physical maturity, independence and mobility of adults, their life experience is still too short and too limited for them to have developed the motivation, responsibility and goal-directed behavior we can expect of a person who has reached adulthood.

In that context, youth bring their own mix of characteristics to most programs, a mix that presents both challenges and opportunities for the program design. Among them are:

- » Low self-esteem coupled with a natural and deep desire to be accepted and do well.
- » Negative attitudes toward classroom learning, a situation in which they have failed to succeed and often regard as unrelated to "real life". Those attitudes contrast with their readiness to accomplish real work that represents success and which they and others can see and admire.
- » Distrust of adults. At the same time, however, youth want to be accepted by an adult they can trust. Consequently, they are alert to and can be counted on to meet adult expectations, especially when such expectations are negative.
- » Strong peer loyalty (with spurts of fickleness), which helps explain the lure of gangs and group anti-social behavior. On the other side of the coin, peer loyalty also helps account for the appeal and effectiveness of teamwork at this age. This age group often yearns to be part of something "bigger," by which they mean concepts or groups broader than self, friends and family.

Young participants bring to their program experience all the restlessness of youth, a host of personal problems and responsibilities, and the hopes and frustrations of those who have experienced failure in school or work but still see possibilities and promise for the future. While no one program can meet the needs of every youth (one size does not fit all), it is also important to recognize that in serving an increasingly "at-risk" population, the task of engaging young people sufficiently in a program that they will stay and learn is a substantial challenge.

The reality of employment and training program designs is that they rarely focus on the developmental and social needs of their participants. The fact is that the adolescent years are critical in the growth and maturation of young people. To have a chance for success, interventions with young people must plan for and foster psychological, cognitive and social development through a proactive philosophy and a consistent learning environment and program structure.

PLANNING ELEMENT #2: DEFINING OUTCOMES

Defining outcomes is another critical element to the design of effective youth programs. Although, most practitioners agree that the ultimate outcome for youth in employment and training programs is "to attain economic self-sufficiency through employment," it is important to recognize that for many youth -- especially those requiring long term, intensive basic skills remediation and workplace training -- it will be necessary to establish meaningful interim outcomes on the road to employability. Because the characteristics of young people vary significantly, outcomes must be appropriate for those being served. For some youth, immediate employment is not only possible but appropriate and desirable. For others, some exposure to the world of work may be necessary prior to placement, and for still others extensive training, counseling and rigorous work site training will be required prior to quality placement. For every youth, though, "How long it takes to reach the level of employability (e.g. job readiness) depends on where you start."

In developing quality programs and a coherent strategy for serving youth, practitioners and policy makers need to define outcomes that are meaningful, that are related to youths' initial skill levels, and that reflect real progress toward youth development and employability. For those youth needing intensive assistance, employability skills development as measured by "competency attainment" under JTPA can be a logical interim outcome. For other youth, employment may be the only outcome that reflects real gains. What is important, however, is that there is a sequence of outcomes that enable young people to be adequately prepared before they are placed in a job.

PLANNING ELEMENT #3: FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CARING, SKILLED ADULTS

The quality and commitment of a staff can make or break a program. For it is the people who bring all of the elements together and "make the magic happen." It is critical that staff be committed to the program philosophy and have people and content skills to act and make decisions around important design and implementation decisions. But most importantly, staff form relationships with young participants and it is for the most part on the strength or weakness of these relationships that a program succeeds or fails.

In order for young people to buy in and stick with a long-term intervention, s/he must respect and trust the professional who is serving him/her. The same holds true in reverse. This relationship does not come easily or instantaneously. It is built over time, and usually requires many positive intervention and often considerable struggle.

Obviously, careful selection, training, and supervision of staff -- and volunteers -- is necessary to ensure that staff have the competency and maturity to gain the respect of and foster growth in young people.

PLANNING ELEMENT #4: LINKING WORK AND LEARNING

Experienced practitioners have long known that programs that combine work experience with education and training have tended to produce better outcomes than those that provide either intervention alone. This theme underlies many of the changes in current youth programming, most notably the Summer Beginnings National Work and Learning Network, sponsored by U.S. Department of Labor and managed by Brandeis University. In recent years, researchers and policy makers have begun to argue that the link between work and education should be strengthened even more, and that work materials and situations need to be fully integrated into any educational effort, especially those intended to develop long-term employability for youth.

By providing students with opportunities to practice their skills in realistic settings and to apply their skills in work-related situations, educational programs can not only produce more relevant outcomes, but can help most youth and adults learn those skills more quickly and effectively.¹³

¹³ Irwin Kirsch and Ann Jungeblut, *Literacy: Profiles of America's Young Adults*, (Princeton, NJ: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1986); U.S. Department of Labor, Secretary's Commission on the Achievement of Necessary Skills, *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Commission Report for America 2000* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1991); Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages* (Rochester, NY: National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990). Much of this research is summarized in the Center for Human Resources' guide, *An Introduction to Basic Skills Education for At-Risk Youth: A Decision Maker's Guide to Principles and Practices* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Center for Human Resources, 1989).

For practitioners, the emphasis on linking work and learning means taking a close look at how the education, and work/training activities in any comprehensive program are connected and relate to one another.

The critical element in any work and learning strategy is to make the connection between work and learning clear, ongoing, and explicit. In practical terms, that means not only that work-related materials are used in the classroom, but that teachers, worksite supervisors and employers meet regularly to make sure that their efforts are coordinated and that each is aware of the skills and tasks being emphasized in the classroom and the worksite. The goal here is a simple one: to make sure that all of those involved -- teachers, supervisors, and participants, can make regular, "moment to moment" connections between the work skills and the educational skills being taught in the program.

PLANNING ELEMENT #5: PROVIDING QUALITY WORK EXPERIENCE

The quality of the work experience provided through a youth program is also key. For most young people, work provides a unique opportunity to try out adult roles, gain a sense of competence and achievement and learn about the various responsibilities associated with work and adulthood. In that context, the experience of working represents more than the simple acculturation into the life of work -- though that may also be important. It also provides a fundamental means of reinforcing a range of learning and developmental goals.

For practitioners, a practical message is that regardless of the work *site*, program planners and managers must think about how to structure the work *experience* so that it provides an opportunity to learn new skills and reinforce positive attitudes and behaviors. To do that, a job must offer real work (not make work) with real products and fair pay. It must also provide young people with the sense that they are engaged in a meaningful venture with the important future applications of the skills they are gaining. Finally, the work experience must also provide "concerned, caring supervision" -- supervision that mixes patient support with consistent discipline and high expectations. As more than one practitioner observed, "the most important ingredient for any work experience is good supervision."

PLANNING ELEMENT #6: PROVIDING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

An important major element is the provision of and access to supportive services. Young people entering employment and education programs bring with them a range of practical needs and support issues that have to be addressed -- child care, parenting responsibilities, health, transportation and employment needs, etc. All of these issues represent a challenge to programs to maintain attendance and participation.

There are two basic lessons concerning support services. The first is that programs need to design services so that they are easily accessible -- and in many cases on site. It is important to note that this does not mean that providers need to provide all the needed support services in-house (i.e. with agency staff), but rather than an effort needs to be made to provide those services on site, by co-locating outside agency staff or by arranging for regular visits by outside service providers.

The second major lesson is that programs need to recognize they represent only one of many demands on participating youth. As such, they need to balance the emphasis on providing a work-like schedule for participants (a common goal and effective teaching device) with the recognition of the time participants may need to spend arranging housing, taking children to the doctor, or meeting with caseworkers from the welfare department. In practical terms, programs need to provide some degree of flexibility in their design so that participants can meet their outside commitments while successfully participating. This may mean providing a less-than-full-time schedule for program activities or opportunities for "make up time" to recoup lost days. It may also mean providing for open-entry/open-exit programming and the design of activities that can be taken on as relatively distinct units of effort.

PLANNING ELEMENT #7: INCREASING MOTIVATION

Yet in the end, most of the basic issues of program design come down to the question of how to engage and motivate participants. In broad terms, once the basic design is determined, practitioners need to look at programs to determine to what extent they provide activities that encourage young people to do the following:

- » learn in a hands-on manner;
- » demonstrate competence and build relationships;
- » develop a sense of "membership" in a community or group; and
- » see themselves as participating in a larger effort leading towards a real future.

In the words of one educational researcher, the key to any effective program -- in-school or out -- is the fostering of a sense of engagement, when students "devote substantial time and effort to a task, when they care about the quality of their work, and when they commit themselves because the work seems to have significance beyond its personal instrumental value."¹⁴ Each of the various program elements discussed above represents an opportunity to engage and involve youth. But for any of them to work, practitioners need to continually return to the question of the needs, desires and barriers of participating youth and the kinds of opportunities each program offers for them to gain a sense of engagement, achievement and mastery.

¹⁴ F.M. Newman, "Student Engagement and High School Reform," *Educational Leadership*, 45, no. 5 (1989), cited in Alexandra T. Weinbaum and Anita Baker, *Final Implementation Report: High School Redirection Replication Project* (NY: Academy for Educational Development, 1991).

FIVE KINDS OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT/TRAINING PROGRAMS

- **INCENTIVE SERVICES**
Used to attract students or help them persist (example: cash allowances; stipends; bus tokens; formula, toys, diapers for youth in parenting programs).
- **ENABLING SERVICES**
Help students with barriers participate in a program (examples: transportation; child care; meals; work clothes or supplies; books).
- **COMPENSATORY SERVICES**
Services designed to compensate students for social or other disadvantages they face or experience (examples: recreation, mentoring, financial management, life skills training, self esteem, etc.).
- **INTENSIVE OR THERAPEUTIC SERVICES**
Services designed to assist youth in overcoming serious, potentially serious or multiple problems (examples: professional therapy or counseling, outpatient treatment, emergency dental or medical services, emergency housing assistance).
- **POST-PROGRAM SERVICES**
Services referred to as follow-up, transitional or after-care, designed to check progress or ensure longer term success. (examples: peer-group support, counseling, drop-in or referral centers, formal resources for child or health care).

PLANNING ELEMENT #8: INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

Changing demands of the labor market and the larger society, along with JTPA's shift in emphasis towards serving the most at-risk youth with more intensive and longer-term services makes it impossible for JTPA to "go it alone." Program design and implementation must be a collaborative process and the community needs be involved at many levels.

On the program level, JTPA administrators, schools, businesses and social service agencies need to work together to identify the needs of area youth, to develop programs that link work and learning, to organize case management systems and provide needed support services. On the systems/policy level, JTPA policy makers, administrators and service

providers also have to work collaboratively along with employers, educators and others to define the basic skills that young people in the community need and to set performance standards and payment policies that are workable for all the parties involved. It is through this "top down/bottom up" process, in which policy makers and providers work together to define mutually acceptable standards and goals, that the most effective policies and programs are designed.

A critical part of developing partnerships and involving the community in the development and implementation of effective youth programs is to market to both potential partners and the community as a whole. Demonstrating the significant impact the program can have on the community can assist in identifying new funding sources, bringing partners on board, changing negative stereotypes about people or programs, and garnering community support. Advocates at any level can do this by developing a clear message about the program that focuses on win-win outcomes -- youth develop valuable and relevant transferrable skills and the community gains the valuable contributions of these youth.

Youth program marketing should begin with a clear program message that comes from a well-developed mission statement that all stakeholders had input in creating. A mission statement describes the program purpose and goals, the benefits to participants and the community, and the outcomes are expected through program participation. The mission statement or message can be made clear to the community through public presentations, peer recruitment, formal advertising or program sponsored community service projects.

In any discussion of program marketing, it is important to note that the young people are a youth program's primary customer and programs should not forget to market their program to youth in terms of what the youth value about the program -- not what adults, funding sources or institutions value.

PLANNING ELEMENT #9: FUNDING

Developing effective funding strategies helps to ensure the longevity of the program and allows flexibility and improvements in program design. In addition, joint funding strategies ensure that programs can serve a more diverse mix of young people. Effective strategies include building a broad base of funding sources; finding and taking advantage of in-kind contributions; using the past success of the program to solicit new funding sources; leveraging resources; and involving the private sector. In general, it is important to be creative and innovative, and to push beyond the limits of JTPA or other single source funding.

PLANNING ELEMENT #10: BUDGETING

Developing and implementing a quality youth program means investing significant resources in youth. An important thing to keep in mind when moving towards quality is that **more money does not translate into more young people served.** States and SDAs are increasingly challenged to deal with the politics of serving fewer youth, even when there are greater resources. SDA's must often re-educate stakeholders to the fact that longer term, more comprehensive services lead to better outcomes for those most "at-risk." Better services mean greater investments in quality staff, professional training, and curriculum/instruction.

**THE KEY QUESTIONS
BEHIND
YOUTH PROGRAM DESIGN
PART ONE**

WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD WE SERVE?

WHAT ARE THE COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE?

WHAT SKILLS AND TRAITS DOES OUR LABOR MARKET CALL FOR?

WHAT PROGRAM OUTCOMES DO WE WANT FOR THESE YOUNG PEOPLE?

WHAT PROGRAMS DO WE NEED TO OFFER TO ACHIEVE THESE OUTCOMES?

HOW DO WE RECRUIT APPROPRIATE PARTICIPANTS?

HOW DO WE DESIGN APPLICATION PROCEDURES?

HOW DO WE HANDLE PROGRAM MATCHING?

HOW DO WE CONDUCT ORIENTATIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS?

WHAT UP-FRONT ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE DONE?

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD WE GATHER DURING THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD WE GATHER THROUGH TESTS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS?

WHAT OTHER INFORMATION SHOULD WE GATHER UP-FRONT?

HOW SHOULD UP-FRONT INFORMATION BE INTERPRETED?

HOW DO WE DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL SERVICE STRATEGIES?

WHAT UP-FRONT COUNSELING SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO FACILITATE REFERRALS TO OTHER SERVICES?

WHAT ONGOING COUNSELING AND CASE MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

WHAT ONGOING ASSESSMENT SHOULD OCCUR?

WHAT OTHER DESIGN AND LOGISTICAL ISSUES SHOULD WE CONSIDER?

WHAT END-OF-PROGRAM TRANSITION SERVICES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE?

**THE KEY QUESTIONS
BEHIND
YOUTH PROGRAM DESIGN
PART TWO**

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD WE GATHER THROUGH TESTS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS?

**WHAT OTHER INFORMATION SHOULD WE GATHER UP-FRONT?
HOW SHOULD UP-FRONT INFORMATION BE INTERPRETED?**

HOW DO WE DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL SERVICE STRATEGIES?

WHAT UP-FRONT COUNSELING SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO FACILITATE REFERRALS TO OTHER SERVICES?

WHAT ONGOING COUNSELING AND CASE MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

WHAT ONGOING ASSESSMENT SHOULD OCCUR?

WHAT OTHER DESIGN AND LOGISTICAL ISSUES SHOULD WE CONSIDER?

WHAT END-OF-PROGRAM TRANSITION SERVICES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE?

**A LISTING:
ISSUES TO CONSIDER
WHEN PLANNING
PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH**

WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD WE SERVE?

Given that the total JTPA-eligible youth population in any SDA is usually larger than the SDA's enrollment capacity, an SDA needs to ask:

- » Which "subgroups" from among the total eligible youth population will we serve?

WHAT ARE THE COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE?

Of the subgroups of youth we will serve, what are their:

- » common characteristics?
- » skills levels at program entry?
- » developmental traits?
- » common patterns of need?

WHAT SKILLS AND TRAITS DOES OUR LOCAL LABOR MARKET CALL FOR?

If we consider the patterns of required or preferred skills, abilities, and personal traits that employers want:

- » What skills do local/regional employers call for among all employees now?
- » What skills do local/regional employers project that they will need among all employees in the future?
- » At present, what skills do local/regional employers seek from young people?
- » Of these skills, which do local/regional employers expect JTPA and other agencies to provide to young people?
- » Which skills are local/regional employers willing to teach or convey to young people?

WHAT PROGRAM OUTCOMES DO WE WANT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

If we couple who we plan to serve with what employers demand, what outcomes should we seek from a community-wide youth-serving system?

- » What outcomes might JTPA attempt to deliver (e.g., What services can JTPA provide that fall within its mission, resources, and regulatory constraints?)?
- » What outcomes might other institutions in a community attempt to deliver (e.g., What services can others provide that fall within their missions, resources, and regulatory constraints?)?

WHAT PROGRAMS DO WE NEED TO OFFER?

Given who we plan to serve, their characteristics, labor market demands, and outcomes we want, we must consider:

- » What skills do we need to convey to achieve the outcomes we seek?
- » In general, what kinds of programs and activities deliver these outcomes?
- » What strategies work best with young adolescents?
- » What strategies work best with older adolescents?
- » What approaches work best with "at-risk" youth?
- » What program approaches work best with in-school youth?
- » What program approaches work best with school dropouts?
- » What do adults need to do to develop solid relationships with young people?
- » What mix of strategies, approaches, and programs will facilitate success with those young people we've targeted?
- » What can JTPA do?
- » What do we need to rely upon other agencies or institutions to do?

HOW DO WE RECRUIT APPROPRIATE PARTICIPANTS?

Given who we intend to serve and what we offer, how will we attract appropriate youths to apply? The SDA will need to ask:

- » Who should be the audiences of our outreach efforts?
- » How should our program offerings be described -- verbally and in writing -- to each target audience?
- » To whom should we address our marketing/outreach efforts?
- » Who should do this marketing/outreach work?
- » What specific marketing/outreach strategies should be used to attract eligible youths to apply?
- » Which organizations should be involved in outreach and recruitment?
- » What roles should each organization play in outreach and recruitment?
- » What do these organizations and their staffs need to know if they are to carry out the outreach/recruitment functions effectively?
- » What supports and materials should these organizations have and/or offer if they are to carry out the outreach/recruitment functions effectively?
- » How will these organizations learn what they need to know to conduct the outreach/recruitment function, and how will this knowledge be delivered?
- » How will questions from organizations conducting recruitment be handled?

HOW DO WE DESIGN APPLICATION PROCEDURES?

Assuming that the SDA succeeds at attracting applicants, it must then ask how the application procedure will operate:

- » Which organizations and staff should handle the application process?
- » How will staff at these organizations be trained?
- » How can applicants who need help applying be assisted with the process?
- » What additional intake processes will be necessary if participants are to enter appropriate programs?
- » What will be done to administer and respond to applications?
- » How will applicants be notified that they are enrolled in a specific program?
- » How will accepted applicants be notified about their next steps?
- » How will applicant questions be addressed?
- » What logistics will be involved?

HOW WILL WE HANDLE PROGRAM MATCHING?

Once young people have applied, the SDA must consider how it will match them with the services they really need:

- » What will be the target group(s) for each program offered by the SDA?
- » How will the SDA decide which participants will be matched with which program?
- » Which participants should be enrolled in which programs?
- » Which information gathered during assessment and counseling will be used to match participants with appropriate programs?
- » What processes will be used to assure appropriate program matches?
- » Who will be involved in the decision-making?
- » What logistics will be involved in setting up this matching process?

HOW WILL WE CONDUCT ORIENTATIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS?

Every youth enrolled in a JTPA program should receive an orientation detailing not only JTPA services, but also other available resources in the community. Before orientations can be designed, SDAs need to answer "content" and "delivery" questions such as:

- » What should be the standard content of orientations for all participants, regardless of which program they are enrolled in?
- » What orientation content should focus on specific programs or activities?
- » What types of orientations and processes will be needed for program participants?
- » What will be the logistics for delivering standard and specialized information?

WHAT UP-FRONT ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE DONE?

Before designing an assessment process or choosing instruments, an SDA needs to consider what role(s) assessment should play:

- » to predict potential participants' chances of success in a program?
- » to screen potential participants in or out of programs?
- » to diagnose or identify skill levels and needs of individual participants?
- » to track progress through and across programs?
- » to evaluate effectiveness of individual programs or interventions?
- » to identify additional resources needed to address the needs of participants?

An SDA needs to consider what kinds of information it needs from applicants -- **up-front**. Program planners might wish to consider overriding questions such as:

- » How will we know "where each young person is" academically, skill-wise, and support-service-wise when s/he starts with us?
- » How will we know what type of interventions are "right" for each participant?
- » How will we know what goals are achievable for each participant within the summer program's time constraints?

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD WE GATHER DURING THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

Some information can be gathered during the initial application process. Questions such as the following arise:

- » What information should or can be gathered during the application process?
- » What should the application process look like?
- » What information should be solicited from schools, alternative education programs, other programs, and other agencies?
- » What information should be collected from applicants on the program's application form(s)?
- » How can the up-front information process and form(s) be made "user friendly" for participants and institutions?
- » How will this information be used?
- » What logistics will be involved in the information-gathering process?
- » How can the SDA insure that it doesn't duplicate prior information-gathering; but rather obtains information from whoever has it?

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD WE GATHER THROUGH ADMINISTRATION OF TESTS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS?

If participants are to be placed into appropriate options, SDAs will need to consider the use of formal instruments that might have been administered before, upon, or after program entry. These instruments might measure:

- » reading level/comprehension/application skills;
- » writing capacity/grammar/application skills;
- » mathematics level/comprehension/application skills;
- » higher-order thinking skills;
- » problem-solving skills;
- » life skills;
- » parenting skills;
- » social / interpersonal skills;
- » leadership skills;
- » pre-employment/work-maturity skills;
- » occupational interests;
- » specific occupational skills;
- » vocational aptitudes; and
- » other skills.

SDAs need also to consider issues such as:

- » Of the instruments we administer, which will be in the form of pre- and post-tests?
- » What modes of performance-based testing can be utilized?
- » How will we "benchmark" learning?
- » How can we use youths' successful performance of work tasks to serve as testing devices?
- » How will youths be involved in and oriented to the measurement process?
- » How will participants be "put at ease" with the measurement process?
- » Who will administer tests and other instruments, if any?
- » When will testing/administration occur, if applicable?
- » How will information gleaned from measurement processes be used?
- » What logistics will be involved in the measurement process?

WHAT OTHER INFORMATION SHOULD WE GATHER UP-FRONT?

Since testing is not the only form of assessment, SDAs need to consider:

- » What additional education-related, skills-based, or other information must be gathered up front?
- » How will it be gathered and by whom?
- » When will it be gathered?
- » How will information gleaned from this process be used?
- » What logistics will be involved in the gathering this information?

HOW SHOULD UP-FRONT INFORMATION BE INTERPRETED?

Once testing and other assessment procedures have been completed, SDAs need to consider:

- » Who will interpret up-front assessment information?
- » How will this information be used?
- » What logistics will be involved in interpreting and using this information?
- » Will assessment information be shared with involved institutions and/or with individuals who provide instruction or training? If so, how and what?

HOW DO WE DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL SERVICE STRATEGIES?

Ultimately, SDA staff will need to work with each young person to develop a plan of action (a.k.a., the "Individual Service Strategy"). Before this can occur, the SDA needs to decide:

- » What elements will be present in each participant's service strategy?
- » Who will develop an initial service strategy for each participant?
- » What processes will be used to develop these service strategies?
- » How will the strategy become a "living document" that is reviewed and revised throughout the program?
- » What additional assessments will be conducted throughout the program that contribute to ISS review, revision, and subsequent implementation?
- » Who will be responsible for monitoring, revising, and overseeing ongoing implementation of each participant's service strategy?

WHAT UP-FRONT COUNSELING SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

Individual Service Strategies are not created magically. Young people need the advice of a well-trained adult as they develop their action plan. SDAs need to consider:

- » What counseling will be called for to help participants use up-front and ongoing information?
- » What counseling will be offered to assist participants to develop their ISS?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO FACILITATE REFERRALS TO OTHER SERVICES?

Many young people will need assistance from non-JTPA organizations. An SDA needs to consider:

- » Which information gathered during up-front assessment and counseling will be used to match participants with appropriate non-JTPA services?
- » How will assessment and linkage information be incorporated into each participant's service strategy?
- » What vehicles, policies, and/or linkages will enable JTPA staff to link participants with non-JTPA services?
- » What processes will be used to assure appropriate referrals to and linkages with those services?
- » Who will be involved in the decision-making?
- » What logistics will be involved in setting up matching and linking process?
- » Who will follow-up on participants to assure that they receive the services they need?

WHAT ONGOING COUNSELING AND CASE MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

Individual Service Strategies are tough to implement over time. Many things go wrong. Many changes occur. Adolescents behave like adolescents. The SDA needs to consider:

- » What counseling and case management support should be offered to all participants over time?
- » What criteria will be used to define what types, how often, and in what forms these supports will be provided?
- » What program and administrative supports will be provided to line staff who, when providing such supports, discover a participant need that should be addressed?
- » How will each participant's individual service strategy play an ongoing role?
- » What logistics are involved in providing ongoing counseling and case management supports to participants?

WHAT ONGOING ASSESSMENT SHOULD OCCUR?

Before designing an ongoing assessment process or choosing instruments, an SDA needs to consider what the role(s) of ongoing assessment should be:

- » to identify and monitor learning gains?
- » to diagnose or identify ongoing needs of individual participants?
- » to track progress through and across programs?
- » to evaluate effectiveness of individual programs or interventions?
- » to identify additional resources needed to address the needs of participants?
- » to certify learning gains or skills attained?

WHAT OTHER DESIGN AND LOGISTICAL ISSUES SHOULD WE CONSIDER?

Program planners might wish to consider overriding questions such as:

- » How will we know "where each young person is" now versus when s/he started with us?
- » What education and skill-based information should or can be gathered on an ongoing basis?
- » How will we know whether the types of interventions we chose for each participant were the "right" ones?
- » How will we know whether the skills-based goals we set for each participant are actually going to be realistic and achievable within the program's time constraints?
- » What modes of performance-based testing can be utilized?
- » Who will administer ongoing assessments?
- » When will ongoing assessments occur?
- » What logistics will be involved in the ongoing information-gathering process?

WHAT KINDS OF END-OF-PROGRAM TRANSITION SERVICES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE?

JTPA youth programs can help a young person advance "just-so-far." There is a point at which we "let go." If our client is to advance beyond our limited scope, we must ask:

- » What assessments will be done regarding participants' gains?
- » How will the information gleaned through end-of-program assessments be coordinated with subsequent school activities for in-school youths?
 - For example, how might learning derived through a summer program be connected with the school-based learning that recommences in September?
- » How will the information gleaned through end-of-program assessments be used to guide subsequent interventions for out-of-school youths?
 - For example, how will learning gains in a GED program be used to encourage youths to investigate post-secondary education, apprenticeship, or other options once they've obtained their GED certificates?
- » What work-related transition services will be provided to participants for whom there are no subsequent JTPA options when the program ends?
- » How will we assure that young people continue to make gains after they leave JTPA programs?

PART FOUR SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE
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This Assessment Tool can be used to determine whether staff members are creating a supportive, caring environment for the young people in their programs. Does your staff support the young people of your program in the following ways?

YES	NO	IMPORTANT WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE
		Promotes And Rewards Attempts At Independence
		Promotes Self-Worth
		Provides Opportunities And Challenges For Cognitive Growth
		Provides Opportunities To Relate With Adults And Peers As Role-Models Who Come From "Their World"
		Provides Opportunities To Relate With Adults In A Non-Threatening, Non-Judgmental Environment
		Encourages Young People To Take Advantage Of Opportunities
		Encourages Young People To Consider And Evaluate, Before Acting
		Possesses A Genuine Interest In Young People And Youth Development
		Possesses Patience & Boundless Energy
		Other:

<p style="text-align: center;">PART FOUR AT-RISK YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE NEEDS</p>

Joy Dryfoss (1990), a researcher, estimates that about half of the nation's 28 million 10-to-17 year olds are "at-risk". Practitioners in the field report that an increasing number of youth entering their programs lack the basic life supports. The following is a list of some of the important service needs of at-risk youth. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

<u>CHECKLIST</u>	<u>YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE NEEDS</u>
	CHILD CARE
	COUNSELING
	FAMILY PLANNING
	PARENTING CLASSES
	LEGAL SERVICES
	CASH PAYMENTS
	HEALTH CARE/DENTAL
	FINANCIAL COUNSELING
	HOUSING ASSISTANCE
	HANDICAPPED SERVICES
	PEER-GROUP SUPPORT
	LIFE SKILLS TRAINING
	FOOD, CLOTHING
	SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT
	PARENTAL AND ADULT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

PART FIVE

PROGRAM STRATEGIES: SERVING THOSE MOST AT RISK

INTRODUCTION

As every practitioner knows, there are literally hundreds of individual program strategies for serving in-and-out-of-school youth, each with its own curriculum and particular mix of services. That variety reflects a critical diversity of local circumstances -- no matter how many "models" we may have on hand, every program ultimately has to be built using local knowledge, experience, and resources. At the same time, that diversity often makes it difficult for practitioners to gain a clear sense of what the basic program options are for serving in-and-out-of-school youth.

Within this section of the TAG, we attempt to cut through this confusion by highlighting several basic types of approaches and placing them in the context of the broader lessons that we have learned about successful employment and training programs. The focus here is on comprehensive programs designed for in-school youth and out-of-school youth generally considered "most at risk." Though most of these programs have the capacity to serve more highly skilled youth, they are generally aimed at (and represent an appropriate investment for) those young people needing a relatively intensive set of interventions (in terms of the multi-tiered employability development model, those likely to be assessed in the lower two tiers). As such, they represent the types of programs that will grow in importance as practitioners shift their focus increasingly toward more "at risk" youth.

WHAT "WORKS" IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: A BRIEF REVIEW

Given the needs and characteristics of in-and-out-of-school youth and the types of skills they need to learn, what do we know about "what works" in terms of program options? As summarized in one review of the youth employment record, these lessons include:

- » No single program approach solves all youth unemployment problems. The complexities of the problems and the limitations of programming knowledge probably rule out the discovery of such a panacea in the future.
- » Programs with several service elements are likelier to produce results than single-service efforts. Thus, work experience, ineffective in itself, offers synergistic potential when offered with other program elements. Similarly, a coherent array of programs is usually needed to serve the multiple and varying needs of a community's at-risk youth population.

- » Programs with longer durations are likelier to produce more lasting effects. Likewise, actual length of stay in the program is generally correlated to results, a vexing issue in view of the generally high rate of attrition most (even the best) programs may experience.
- » Youths' needs tend to follow a sequence by age, with education-based services most appropriate for younger youth and services oriented toward the labor market (skills training in particular) most appropriate for older youth.¹⁵

The following sections, Part A and Part B, examines three broad groups of employability program strategies for both in-and-out-of-school youth.

¹⁵ Smith, Walker, and Baker, *Youth and the Workplace*.

PART 5A PROGRAM OPTIONS FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH

Although local employment and training interventions for in-school youth vary widely, most can be categorized along a continuum of three overall program options:

- » Option 1: Transition assistance
- » Option 2: Alternative (Intensive) programming
- » Option 3: Whole school work and learning strategies

The three program options illustrate the range of choices that employment and training planners and practitioners might make about their investments on behalf of in-school youth. They vary in terms of factors such as the number of students served, the length of service, and the scope of the intervention. The decision about which program option (or which specific program model) is most feasible for a community should be based on the particular needs of youth in that community, a hard look at what has been working (and what hasn't), and the current philosophy and goals of the employment and training community and its partners.

Several program models illustrate each broad program option. While each example has proven effective, those in the *whole school work and learning strategies* category tend to generate more systemic assistance and suggest ways in which the employment and training community can *move from supporting effective, but marginal, programs to supporting initiatives that are integrated into the mainstream of educational efforts.*

OPTION 1: TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

Overview

Transition assistance is specific, time-limited assistance provided to young people who are experiencing personal and school-related difficulties. Transition assistance occurs at critical intervention points -- periods when young people having trouble are most likely to fall seriously behind or to drop out -- and consequently is age- and stage-specific.

Research points up a number of critical junctures for young people. One particularly important juncture is the *transition from middle to high school*. One study of the impact of school transitions on dropouts used pre-high school data to show that dropouts experienced much more severe declines in their academic grades during transitions from elementary to middle and middle to high school than did students who do not drop out. These youth did

not recover from losses suffered during the transitions. In fact, a youth's grades during school transition years emerged as an important predictor of noncompletion, and eighth-grade attendance was the strongest single grade predictor of dropping out.¹⁶

Many educators and employment and training professionals consider *the long summer break* a critical transition point for disadvantaged young people. Research on "learning decay" or "summer learning loss" shows that when school resumes, youth from advantaged backgrounds actually score higher on standardized tests than they did before the summer, while disadvantaged young people have fallen farther behind.¹⁷

The first year of high school presents challenges to students who are behind academically and who may be experiencing personal difficulties. Many urban schools find that their highest dropout rates occur during the first year of high school. It is interesting to note the concurrent phenomenon of high rates of grade retention, course failure, and suspension in urban ninth grades. Pittsburgh provides one case in point. Within that city's youth cohort, nearly 30 percent of black males were retained in grade nine. In addition, 54 percent of all students in the cohort failed one or more courses in the first year of high school.¹⁸

Another important transition time is *the last two years of high school*, when students undertake either the school-to-work, school-to-college, or future inactivity route.

Analysis

Pros:

- » programs are short-term;
- » participants receive specific help;
- » the program comes at "the right time and right place;" and
- » the program helps promote a positive youth/adult relationship which has very clear goals/outcomes.

¹⁶Roderick, Melissa. *The Path to Dropping Out: Middle School and Early High School Experiences*. Cambridge: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, October 1990.

¹⁷Berlin, Gordon, and A. Sum. *Toward a More Perfect Union: Basic Skills, Poor Families, and Our Economic Future*. New York: The Ford Foundation, 1988.

¹⁸Metis, Associates, Inc. *New Futures Initiative: Cohorts and Comparative Data Report*, Pittsburgh, PA. April 1992.

Cons:

- » the program focuses on short-term intentions that yield only short-term results;
- » there are relatively few students served; and
- » the small programs are costly and marginal.

Transition Assistance Examples

The following descriptions represent several examples of transition assistance strategies.

EXAMPLE OF TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

GRANT HIGH SCHOOL'S VOCATIONAL CONTINUUM Portland, Oregon

Program Description

Grant High School in Portland, Oregon, has developed and instituted a Vocational Continuum comprised of three programs: Public/Private Ventures' Bridge Program, a Partnership Project, and a Vocational Mentoring component. Each program is intended to help students with transitions -- first, transition to high school, and later, transition to post-secondary options -- while providing the maximum benefits of vocational offerings.

Essential Elements

The Bridge Program helps eighth graders make the transition into high school and establish patterns of success in ninth and tenth grades. The program curriculum develops the participants' skills so that they are able to graduate and to make education and employment decisions upon graduation. P/PV developed the original curriculum to provide a structured sequence of activities for eighth and ninth graders. The curriculum covers a broad range of topics: self-esteem, personal responsibility, decision-making, time management, conflict resolution, communication, peer relationships, career awareness, leadership, goals and expectations, multi-ethnic awareness, traditional and non-traditional roles, substance abuse, self-preservation, community resources, and use of leisure time. Each topic is presented as it connects to students' everyday lives. Teaching methods include group discussion, role play, writing projects, and reading assignments.

During the summer, students participate in the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP), with a half day of basic skills and life skills training and a half day of work experience.

The Partnership Project is a school-to-work transition program designed to prepare young people for entry-level jobs in the private sector. Students in The Partnership Project develop and upgrade their basic skills, gain meaningful work experience before graduation, receive school credits for special classes and work experience, earn money and learn how to budget, and increase their self-esteem and their motivation to succeed.

The Vocational Mentoring Program is a school-to-work transition program designed to provide youth with vocational/technical training and individualized academic instruction. The program offers juniors and seniors an opportunity to explore and develop skills for a variety of occupations in the health and service-related fields. Hospital employees act as mentors as they instruct, monitor, and supervise the students.

For more information

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EXAMPLE OF TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

JOBS FOR AMERICA'S GRADUATES (National Program)

Program Description

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) is a national school-to-work transition program for at-risk and disadvantaged young people. In the 1991-92 school year, JAG served 22,000 youth in 350 high schools located in 19 states or U.S. territories. The JAG model was established in 1980 after an initial test in the state of Delaware and now includes a comprehensive dropout prevention component in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades, as well as school-to-work transition activities in the twelfth grade.

JAG has two main goals:

- » 90 percent of JAG program participants will graduate from high school or receive their GED within nine months of the normal graduation period; and
- » 80 percent of JAG participants will be on the job, in the military, or in postsecondary education/training programs within nine months after leaving school.

From participant selection through follow-up, JAG is an 18-month process. School officials and guidance personnel select students in cooperation with the JAG job specialist based on four criteria: poor achievement, absenteeism, discipline or other problems in school, and economic disadvantage. An in-school committee including the principal, teachers, guidance counselors and the job specialist makes final selection decisions, and program participation is voluntary. In late fall, young people participate in a statewide Career Association meeting. Within this group, students work with job specialists in a structured, motivational learning environment to achieve the competencies JAG requires. Participants work with job specialists individually or in groups for a minimum of two hours per week; many sites offer as many as five hours per week.

From February to May, the job specialists implement job development strategies, most often after school hours. Efforts focus on acquainting the business community with the program, the students, and the job specialists before placement is arranged. As the school year comes to a close, job specialists work with youth and employers to blend competencies with job opportunities for immediate placement in full-time jobs whenever possible.

During the summer, job specialists help young people and employers to ensure that the job is performed well and that advancement occurs. Those who did not graduate in June are encouraged to continue in educational programs so that they graduate by the beginning of the next school year or secure a GED. JAG services continue through March of the next school year or longer, if the student is still working on a diploma or GED.

Essential Elements

The Twelfth Grade School-to-Work Transition. Grade twelve activities are the heart of the JAG program, and include the following essential components:

- » Job specialists who take personal responsibility for 35-40 high school seniors, most of whom are at-risk of becoming unemployed and/or of not graduating.
- » The JAG Career Association, an organization designed specifically for these young people to develop personal motivation and self-confidence. This experience in group interaction helps students develop decision making, communication, and presentation skills -- all prerequisites for succeeding in the workplace.
- » Focus on achieving 37 employability competencies developed by JAG in cooperation with the private sector. Curriculum materials are drawn from both public and commercial sources, and are regularly evaluated and revised, if necessary, to address specific needs.
- » Arrangements for remedial education from available sources within the school and community to improve study habits and strengthen basic skills.
- » Interaction with social services personnel when help is required for students to overcome barriers to staying in school and finding successful employment.
- » Specific job development activities undertaken by job specialists to contact employers and encourage them to accept JAG youth, at least on a trial basis, when competition for many jobs would otherwise remove such students from consideration.
- » Nine months of personal follow-up by the job specialist with the young people after graduation and with their employers, to ensure that there is a true career opportunity and not merely a dead-end job.

Other Factors

In 1986, JAG expanded to offer a comprehensive program beginning in the ninth grade and combining a dropout prevention approach with the twelfth grade school-to-work transition model program. JAG made this decision to expand its program in order to help at-risk youth stay in school, graduate, and secure a quality job in the private sector upon graduation.

Results

JAG has demonstrated these results since 1980:

- » a 40 percent reduction in the rate of unemployment among at-risk 17- to 19-year olds;
- » twice the likelihood that minority youth get and keep jobs; and
- » increased earnings by an average of more than 20 percent (\$1000) for all participants in the first year and by nearly 50 percent (\$2250) for minority youth participating in the program.

JAG is most successful for youth with the greatest challenges -- minorities, youth with low basic skills and academic achievement, and youth from low-income families who had not worked previously.

For more information

Judith M. Boylson, Director of National Programs, Jobs for America's Graduates, Inc., Suite 200, 1729 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (703) 684-9479

EXAMPLE OF TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE Long Island City, New York

Program Description

Located on the campus of LaGuardia Community College, Middle College High School began in 1974 as the first collaborative high school/college program for at-risk youth who were having difficulties succeeding in traditional high school settings. The goals of the Middle College High School are:

- » to reduce the dropout rate by improving students' academic performance;
- » to improve students' self-esteem and self-concept; and
- » to enhance college and career options by assisting students to reach their full potential.

Many of the students who attend Middle College High School come from families where substance abuse is a problem. About 75 percent of the students are from single parent households. About 40 percent of the students' families are on public assistance. The average ethnic distribution is 45 percent white, 33 percent Hispanic, 21 percent African American, and 1 percent Asian American. Despite the high-risk nature of the student body of about 460 students, about 85 percent graduate, and 75 percent of graduates enter college at LaGuardia or elsewhere.

Students are divided into 36 houses, with 10-15 students in each house. They meet each week with a house advisor to address academic and personal issues. The program works to keep students in the same house until their senior year in order to provide the continuity in relationships that helps them experience and maintain success in the program. Once they earn a specific number of credits, students move to a senior house in order to focus on academic and personal issues that surround post-secondary plans, emphasizing college as an outcome.

Although the curriculum is similar to that of the public school system, teachers cover these materials in radically different ways. Creative teaching strategies used to motivate and involve students include cooperative learning, team-teaching, and multi-disciplinary units. Other methods include student demonstration of learning skills and concepts, as well as student creation of videos, newspapers, and original play productions. The approaches used seek to link learning to students' personal experiences and relationships; this makes academics relevant to daily life and motivates students to attend classes and work hard.

Classes have been lengthened to 70 minutes to allow more time for creative experimentation than traditional 40-minute classes offer. As well, students are involved in the evaluation of their work.

At the middle and end of each of the three academic cycles, students receive an evaluation sheet on which they rate their performance according to work completed, attendance, and participation. Students then meet with the teacher to reach agreement on a final grade. This collaborative assessment process is thought to greatly affect students' feeling of ownership and willingness to work hard.

In addition, participants organize awareness activities for the school, go on field trips in and around New York City, and are involved in community service projects. Students also receive services related to teen pregnancy including free pregnancy testing, prenatal care, and child care for students 18 years or younger.

Career education is an integral part of the Middle College program. Each student is required to participate in three different internships -- one each year -- for four hours a day, four days per week. In addition, students prepare for work through classes in personal and career development and in decision-making. Students take two classes in the morning before they go to work. On the fifth day, students attend a seminar to focus their work experience and relate it to their coursework. However, the Middle College does not emphasize the vocational path. One of its goals is to move more students into higher education.

Essential Elements

Major features of the alternative program include:

- » location on a college campus;
- » service to at-risk students through an integrated set of activities;
- » a strong career education component;
- » extensive guidance and support services;

- » flexible scheduling to allow students more course choices; and
- » the opportunity to enroll in college classes.

Other Important Elements

Students and teachers cite the small class size and the reduction in administrative controls on teachers. Teachers have more autonomy and flexibility and thus more time to spend directly with students. Students cite the family atmosphere and the caring attitude of the faculty. Teachers acting as teacher-counselors call students who have been absent for more than two days, provide wake-up calls for students who request them, and advocate for students who need a mediator in their relationships with the administration or the student government.

Parental involvement is also a major part of the school structure. Parents and students attend an initial orientation to familiarize themselves with the school philosophy and procedures. Parents and staff frequently talk about students' progress in the school program and two parent support groups meet once a month. Through these groups, parents learn more about the school and develop close relationships with guidance counselors. Support groups also give parents the opportunity to discuss broader issues affecting them and their ability to effectively support and raise their children.

Results

Based on the success of the Middle College High School, the City University of New York opened four more Middle Colleges. The Ford Foundation awarded LaGuardia Community College a grant to replicate the Middle College model at six sites throughout the country and expanded this to nine sites a few years later. In addition, Pew Charitable Trusts funded the establishment of a Center for At-Risk Students to disseminate information and provide linkages for collaborative programs dedicated to dropout prevention.

For more information

Dr. Janet Lieberman, Special Assistant to the President, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College 31-10, Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, NY 11101, (718) 482-5049

EXAMPLE OF TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

PROJECT PROTECH

Boston, Massachusetts

Description

Project ProTech, a youth apprenticeship program, is a partnership coordinated by the Boston Private Industry Council and funded through a demonstration grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. It prepares students for technical occupations in the health care industry by combining school with hospital-based classroom learning (clinical rotations, internships in hospitals, and hospital-based work experience). During their last two years of high school and two years in community college, ProTech students learn basic, technical, and work-readiness skills in one of the following occupations: medical laboratory technician, radiology technologist, medical office administrator, nuclear medicine technician, EEG technician, EKG technician, and surgical technologist.

ProTech evolved from the Boston Compact, an early 1980s agreement in which the business community agreed to give hiring priority to Boston Public School graduates in return for the school system's promise to improve academic performance and reduce the dropout rate. In 1989, Compact partners agreed to focus on developing high-skilled job opportunities and preparing Boston's public high school students to qualify for them.

ProTech serves high school students who are unlikely to enter and/or complete post-secondary education without the structure of a school-to-work transition program. The current group of ProTech students is typically diverse: half African American, 26 percent Latino, 21 percent Caucasian, and 3 percent Asian. They represent a range of prior academic experience, from achievers to at-risk students.

Participating hospitals are involved in all aspects of the preparation students receive in order to ensure that students can meet the hospitals' employment standards upon graduation. Students from three participating high schools attend introductory health care courses and participating in clinical rotations at one of seven participating hospitals. In addition to the hospital-based curriculum, participating teachers modify high school science and English courses to reinforce the hospital curriculum. Hospital staff help youth understand the work culture of the hospital environment and the skills needed to retain and progress in a particular job. Finally, students gain work-readiness and occupational skills at paid jobs at the hospitals, part-time during the school year and full-time in the summer months.

During the first year of the program, students spend one day per week at the hospitals, attending a class and lab on health care and rotating through various hospital departments to get direct exposure to different jobs. In the second year, students start training in specific health care professions. After high school graduation, ProTech students spend half a day in community college courses and half a day in on-the-job training in their chosen professions. The paid work component increases as students get closer to graduation.

Essential Elements

ProTech's program is built upon these factors:

- » Hospital staff serve as mentors to students on the work site.
- » Students are able to explore a wide range of occupations on the hospital site.
- » Assistance to students is coordinated, age-appropriate, and long-term.
- » ProTech creates explicit links between work and learning.

Results

By ProTech's second year of operation, 120 students from three Boston high schools had enrolled in the first-year program. Initial results include increased student interest and involvement in school, improved attendance rates, and increased levels of student maturity and responsibility. Although they were recruited from a population that was not planning post-secondary education, many ProTech students are now planning to enroll in college as a natural extension of their work and education program. The rigorous expectations and hands-on curriculum have increased students' expectations of themselves, leading them to believe they can achieve more.

For more information

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The following are examples of exemplary Intensive Assistance Examples Prime, Inc., Project Protech, Eagle Rock and High School Redirection.

OPTION 2: INTENSIVE ASSISTANCE

Overview

Intensive assistance is generally longer-term, more flexible, and often more innovative than transition assistance. One type of intensive assistance involves a *multi-year set of activities and services* designed to help vulnerable youth achieve goals such as high school completion or entry into college or a career. A second type of intensive assistance is characterized by *stand-alone programs often called alternative schools*. Alternative schools are located either on the school site (and are often called school-within-school programs) or off-site (in a community-based agency, business, or rented space). Alternative schools provide a non-traditional learning situation for students who have not experienced success in school or who dislike traditional school. Although alternative schools may vary in their basic philosophy, mission, purpose, structure, and program elements, they share certain common elements:

- » small size;
- » a clear academic mission and well-defined goals;
- » diversified teacher roles;
- » interactive curriculum;
- » student participation in many of the school processes;
- » commonly agreed upon rules; and
- » recognition of diverse "learning styles." (Foley and Crull, 1984)

Alternative programming has a long and rich history. Although alternative education suffers somewhat from a lack of rigorous program evaluation, recent studies (particularly those stemming from national demonstrations) indicate that alternative programs can improve attendance and performance and can increase receipt of educational certification. And recent evaluations of longer-term intensive assistance such as Career Beginnings document the success of these programs in enrolling and retaining young people in educational settings.

Analysis

Pros:

- » the program may provide best tested way to save young people deemed most at risk for school failure and other related risk factors;
- » the program is longer term;
- » programs are flexible and allow opportunities to build viable links between work & learning;
- » innovative instruction helps test out new ideas about how students learn;
- » the program personalizes and customizes services; and
- » alternative settings provide a good laboratory for experimentation and innovation at no risk to the students.

Cons:

- » collaboration is required for intensive assistance strategies involving all challenges; and
- » program are often isolated and marginal.

Intensive Assistance Examples

The following descriptions represent two examples of intensive assistance strategies.

EXAMPLE OF INTENSIVE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

PRIME, INC. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Description

PRIME, Inc., is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization established to expand opportunities for minorities in math and science-based professions. PRIME attempts to change the fact that minority children with math and science aptitude often experience barriers to pursuing careers in engineering or technical professions. These obstacles are numerous and include the lack of visible role models, inadequate precollege counseling, lack of self-esteem, and low expectations. Therefore, PRIME works not only to provide students with strong academics but also help students build the confidence and motivation to excel in math and science-based professions.

Since it began in the summer of 1974, when 80 junior high school students from Philadelphia attended a six-week academic program at Drexel University to study chemistry, algebra, and physics, PRIME, Inc. has worked with many companies who have volunteered their engineers, scientists, and mathematicians as mentors and instructors for PRIME students.

Early intervention is a cornerstone of the PRIME approach; identifying students early and getting them the extra help in math and sciences is seen as key to students' future success in mathematics and science-based professions. PRIME recruits minority students as early as the seventh grade and provides them with up to six years of specialized instruction in mathematics, science, and communications.

In the middle and junior high school levels, students meet in PRIME classes during regular school hours and participate in a four-week study program during the summer. At the high school level, PRIME assists students in developing the skills necessary to enter and complete a technical or scientific degree program successfully. During PRIME's after-school program in senior high school, students sharpen their mathematics, science, and writing skills. High school students also receive instruction in computers and lab methodology on weekends through the Saturday Tutorial and Enrichment Program (STEP).

A college coordinator helps juniors and seniors select courses, prepare for college entrance exams, and apply for scholarships and financial aid. PRIME also sponsors college visits in which seniors meet faculty, visit engineering facilities, and network with PRIME graduates on campus. In addition, PRIME offers a residential study program at area colleges and universities, the PRIME Universities Program (PUP). In this enrichment program, minority students interested in for careers in engineering, pharmacy, and math and science-based fields gain a first-hand look at college life by living on campus for a month during the summer before their senior year.

Students receive continued support from PRIME throughout their college years. Their high school college relations coordinator stays in contact with PRIME students and tracks their academic and social development. Workshops on coping with discrimination, balancing leisure and study time, and other "college survival" skills are offered during semester breaks to ensure retention and graduation success for PRIME students.

Essential Elements

Factors that contribute to PRIME, Inc.'s success include these:

- » early identification and intervention;
- » long-term assistance;
- » a sequenced set of age-appropriate activities; and
- » hands-on activities which illustrate the "real world" applications of math and science.

Results

PRIME enrolls thousands of minority students in the Delaware Valley in its academic year, Saturday, and summer programs, and has served over 40,000 youth since 1974. One hundred percent of PRIME students graduate from high school and 96 percent of PRIME high school graduates enter college. More than 60 percent of PRIME graduates choose engineering, computer science, or other technical fields as their majors. Eighty percent of PRIME students who enroll in college continue through graduation.

EXAMPLE OF INTENSIVE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

EAGLE ROCK Estes Park, Colorado

Description

Established by American Honda Education Corporation, Eagle Rock is a year-round, tuition-free, residential high school located on a 650-acre site in a secluded valley just outside Estes Park, Colorado. Eagle Rock's immediate goal is for students to become successful students, but its ultimate goal is for them to become productive and engaged citizens. The school combines education with environmentalism and community service, while providing personalized learning experiences to 15- to 18-year-old students from diverse backgrounds. After one to three years in residence, students earn a diploma and move on to college or entry-level employment.

The school is committed to working with young people who have not experienced success in conventional school setting. Student participation is voluntary; prospective students apply for admission and are nominated through partner school districts or community support groups. Each student has an adult sponsor -- ideally, a parent -- with a long-term interest in the student's success. Admission is based on a combination of objective criteria, references, personal interviews, and student motivation. Eagle Rock students include young people who are experiencing problem relationships in their homes, schools and communities; students who are underachieving at school and are at-risk of dropping out; and students who exhibit low self-esteem. They are from rural, suburban, and urban backgrounds, and are balanced by gender, race, and ethnicity.

Eagle Rock's competency-based curriculum draws heavily from the school's challenging mountain setting. The curriculum is built around how people learn, not how teachers teach. The heart of each student's experience at Eagle Rock is life in the school community, which blends academics, social interaction, governance, cultural activities, work projects, and outdoor education. Eagle Rock instills a strong sense of community which students "take with them" when they leave.

Essential Elements

Key to Eagle Rock's accomplishments are:

- » Small classes, with a one-to-five teacher-student ratio.
- » Relevant learning experiences. Individual learning plans structure learning for student-centered, self-directed progress and guide each student toward graduation. The learning plans build on personal strengths and interests, and stress basic education and life skills.
- » Active involvement in learning. Students and teachers utilize all available resources for experiential and active learning, both in the classroom and well beyond it.
- » Development of students' sense of self-worth. Students are challenged with high standards and expectations for success, buttressed by a strong support system. Initial outdoor, adventure-based challenges transition to academic challenges as self-esteem grows.
- » A positive living and learning environment. Learning takes place all day long, not just during school hours. Students have a role in governing the school and fostering the overall sense of belonging and ownership. Students develop a sense of community through work-based learning projects and through peer group interactions.

Other Factors

Other elements that impact on the Eagle Rock approach include:

- » Citizenship. The curriculum is structured to foster a broadened sense of citizenship, including elements such as cross-cultural understanding, service to others, environmental stewardship, and democratic governance. Projects such as trailbuilding, human service work, school and grounds maintenance, ecosystem research, land management, construction, and farming incorporate citizenship concepts as well as curriculum competencies.
- » School climate. The school environment is explicitly warm and non-threatening. Student "families" of 16 provide ample opportunities for personal growth, as well as the lessons which arise from sustained group activities such as sports, service projects, and chores.

- » **Support services.** Eagle Rock provides medical, dental, and counseling services, as well as clothing, textbooks, and travel. In addition, the school involves each adult sponsor in the school program through visits, service projects, and regular communication with the staff and the student.
- » **Quality staff.** Carefully developed hiring criteria include: integrity and character, a demonstrable high level of subject matter and instructional expertise, enthusiasm and vitality, a commitment to lifelong learning, prior successful experience working with youth, and versatility.

For more information

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OPTION 3: WHOLE SCHOOL WORK AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

Overview

Whole school strategies involve an individual school or group of schools in multiple activities designed to improve young people's education attainment and eventual employability. The activities may be classroom-based or after-school -- field trips, work experience, or whole school convocations. Examples of whole school activities which link work and learning and develop young people's employability are:

- » mentorships (individual or group);
- » guest speakers/career nights;
- » job shadowing experiences;
- » work-based learning;
- » classrooms set up as businesses;
- » tutors or teachers from area businesses; and
- » senior job fairs.

Analysis

Pros:

- » this approach avoids limitations of programmatic approaches;
- » the program encourages ways to experiment with new models of schooling;
- » schools are engaged as real partners; and
- » employment and training interventions become more integrated into the entire school program.

Cons:

- » this approach requires a diverse mix of funds and partners; and
- » these partnerships are complex and must be well managed and carefully monitored.

Whole School Work Learning Examples

The following descriptions represent examples of whole school work learning strategies

EXAMPLE OF WHOLE SCHOOL WORK LEARNING PROGRAM

THE CLEMENT G. MCDONOUGH CITY "MICRO-SOCIETY" MAGNET SCHOOL Lowell, Massachusetts

Description

The Clement G. McDonough City Magnet School is a 330-student, K-8, citywide magnet school started in 1981 as part of Lowell's system-side "controlled choice" desegregation and school improvement plan.

The school's "micro-society" curriculum is an attempt to break down the disconnection between schooling and real life by replacing conventional subjects (reading, writing, social studies, science, music, etc.) with a democratic, free market society within the school that students must design and run themselves. The curriculum encourages students to see that what one learns in school -- especially the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics - has application to life as an adult in society.

In the 1991-92 school year, the McDonough student population was 45 percent minority (African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American). Sixty per cent of the students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. One-third of the school's total population fell into the categories of Chapter I, special education, limited English proficient, or students who have come to the school having been retained in grade.

Essential Elements

- » Innovative curricula. Instead of a curriculum based on the conventional, discrete, academic subjects, the micro-society consists of four basic "strands" -- government and citizenship, economy, publishing, and science/high technology.
- » Innovative instruction. Over the past decade, with their teachers' help, students have set up their own government, and created their own legislative, executive, and judicial branches. They have written and are continually revising, amending, and updating the school Constitution and school laws. They have set up courts and a system of justice, their own system of taxation through an internal revenue service, their own elected legislature, a City School lottery and even a police force called the City School Crime Stoppers. Students have also created a school-based economy and currency system. Students run two banks, operate corporations and businesses (including law firms, corporations that manufacture and sell decorations and toys, retail stores), and publish their own newspapers, books, and magazines.

- » **Links between micro-society work and learning.** Every student must hold a job in the micro-society, for which s/he is paid. In order to earn a living and participate in the school society, students have to "go to school" and pass "placement exams." To have access to jobs in banking, for example, students must pass banking and accounting placement exams at a certain level of competency. In order to become a lawyer or a judge in the judicial system, a student has to pass the bar exam. As a result, the school offers a school within a school, called the City School Academy, where regular classes are conducted during the morning hours. Once students pass an exam in a particular subject, they are able and qualified to move on to jobs in the micro-society where they utilize the skills acquired in the Academy classes, reinforcing the learning and promoting the acquisition of more complex skills.

Other Factors

Over the next two years, the school's administrators, faculty, parents, and students are planning activities involving the creation of a more elaborate evaluation program aimed at tracking the progress of all students, but especially underachieving or at-risk students, and the creation of materials that will assist schools and school systems across the country that have demonstrated interest in replicating the micro-society model.

George Richmond, founder of the micro-society concept, says that the micro-society is "a living experiment" in the development and application of each student's intellectual, social, and moral powers. Both the students and the adults in the school "constantly face moral dilemmas that they must solve as they strive to build a good society. Will the micro-society be one with extremes of poverty and wealth? Will the society be based on law or on fear and violence? Will the micro-society's government assist or ignore children who may not be succeeding? What civil rights will children enjoy? How will citizens assess when justice has been done?"

For more information

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EXAMPLE OF WHOLE SCHOOL WORK AND LEARNING PROGRAM

NEW YORK WORKING New York, New York

Description

New York Working is an activity of the Community Achievement Project in the Schools (CAPS), a joint initiative of the United Way of New York City and the New York City Public Schools. CAPS joins community-based human services organizations with neighborhood public schools to help improve attendance and decrease drop-out rates. New York Working's primary goal is to give non-college bound youth a chance to gain the skills and experience they need to compete in today's work world. The program is based on the belief that collaboration between the business and education community is essential to improving the employability skills of New York City youth.

In each of nine schools, the New York Working program is set up much like a college office, except that its focus is on providing one-stop assistance for students seeking work. New York Working consolidates all existing employment services in the school through the establishment of a Career Development and Employment Center, staffed by job developers and career specialists. In addition to placing students in part-time and full-time jobs, the program enhances the school's curriculum to ensure that what students are taught in the classroom has direct relevance to the world of work.

The New York State Governor's School and Business Alliance, the New York City public schools, Colgate Palmolive and American Express Company, and the Hearst and Public Welfare Foundations provide core funding for New York Working. The United Way is seeking to expand the program's reach to more CAPS schools.

Essential Elements

Critical to the success of New York Working is the input and involvement of the private sector and other area employers. For example, Colgate-Palmolive, which sponsors New York Working at Brooklyn's Prospect Heights High School, provides multiple opportunities for students to explore career options -- field trips, internships, and part-time and full-time jobs opportunities. A representative from Colgate-Palmolive serves on the Prospect Heights Private Sector Advisory Committee. This group helps develop local job opportunities and tailors the school curriculum to meet employers' needs. The advisory committee includes representatives from other area companies and from public and non-profit agencies such as the New York City Parks Department and the Transit Authority. Crown Heights Youth Collective, a local human service organization, serves as the link between the high school and employment opportunities in the area.

For more information

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EXAMPLE OF WHOLE SCHOOL WORK AND LEARNING PROGRAM

BURNETT ACADEMY San Jose, California

Description

Burnett Academy is the nation's first accelerated middle school, an extension of the Accelerated School program started in elementary schools by Henry Levin of Stanford University. Its entire school community voted to become an accelerated school in June, 1990. Teachers, administrators, support staff, students, and parents met with University representatives and then spent the fall of 1990 creating a vision for their school and assessing its current status.

At that time, more than half the students at the school were classified as educationally disadvantaged -- candidates for remedial classes. In its assessment of the school's overall performance, the school team discovered large gaps in course placement depending on minority status. The entire school community decided to create a new vision, based on the belief that all students have the right to an educationally challenging environment and curriculum. One of the most notable and important changes in Burnett Academy since it began the process of acceleration is the participation of the whole school community in making important decisions that affect the educational outcomes of the school.

In creating the action plan, the school team found it needed to set initial priorities for change. This process of setting priorities produced five action areas, organized into committees called cadres: school interactions, curriculum, instruction, family and community involvement, and culture. School staff joined the cadres to work on these issues and chose facilitators for each group. Each facilitator serves on an overall steering committee, along with administrators, support staff representatives, department heads, and student council representatives.

During the first year, the school community spent a great deal of time developing its capacity to make decisions as a group. Through the cadres, teachers, administrators, support staff, students and parents explored problems using a decision-making model. The process helped the group focus on the problem area, generate and synthesize solutions, develop an action plan, test actions, evaluate effectiveness, and reassess priorities. The cadres brought decisions to the steering committee for final action.

Essential Elements

- » Participatory decision-making. The participatory decision-making process allows systematic participation of the entire school community. The steering committee in particular serves as a clearinghouse of information for cadre and staff concerns before the school votes as a whole on items that involve school-wide changes in curriculum, instruction, or organization.
- » Development of a unifying purpose. For Burnett Academy, the unifying purpose was the school/community commitment to making all student successful.
- » School/community input. Using the school-as-a-whole concept, Burnett Academy has expanded the lines of communication beyond traditional boundaries. All staff, teachers, administrators, students, and parents work together on issues affecting the school -- a major change in philosophy. Instead of working in isolation, everyone understands that all aspects of the school are inter-related and thus should work together.
- » Accelerated learning. Burnett Academy abolished the practice of "tracking" and now offers a much different approach to instruction. The school community decided tracking was incompatible with the idea of creating a challenging environment for all students. Individual teachers, as well as the Instruction Cadre, developed ways to create an exciting, challenging environment for all students. As a result, teachers focus on real-life situations rather than worksheet questions, they group students cooperatively on projects, and they communicate with one another and with students on how to modify and add to existing curricula.
- » Using teachers as resources. The Instructional Cadre used student surveys and other information to create a database that tracks instructional strategies that prove successful for both teachers and students. The database also contains individual teachers' strengths and interests so that they can contact one another for ideas or suggestions. Other strategies used and documented include organizing peer visits and peer coaching based on the instructional needs of teachers, visits to other schools' classrooms, teacher videotaping for self-study, a video library of lessons that were particularly successful with students, staff presentations on effective strategies at school-as-a-whole meetings, and a "tips for teachers" newsletter created by Burnett teachers.

Results

Instruction at the Burnett Academy is hands-on, integrated with real life, and based on teamwork. It encourages critical and higher order thinking. Each student in each grade level and in all subject areas studies the same curriculum in heterogeneous classes.

In 1991-92, the Accelerated School project at Stanford started a second and third pilot middle school, and several Accelerated Middle School Satellite Centers have established accelerated middle schools in other parts the country.

The Accelerated Schools Project demonstrates how de-tracking may lead to an enriched and challenging environment for young people, rather than a remedial one. The change also helps bring all students into the educational mainstream. According to Henry Levin, director of the Accelerated Schools Project, the Accelerated Schools Project is both a way of thinking about academic acceleration for all students and a concrete process for achieving it.

For more information

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CHAPTER 5B:

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

There are three broad groups of comprehensive employability program strategies for out-of-school youth:

- » Option 1: Alternative Education Programs;
- » Option 2: Youth/Work Strategies (i.e. service corps and worksite training);
- » Option 3: "Comprehensive" Inter-agency Programs (providing a combination of services, usually focused on a mix of classroom basic skills and occupational skills, along with other classroom-based activities -- pre-employment and life skills training -- and access to substantial supportive services).

While all three strategies are "comprehensive" in their approach, they differ substantially in terms of their emphasis on education versus work or training, the degree of hands-on experience they offer, the extent to which supportive services are integrated into the program model, and the overall intensity of the experience they offer. Though most accept out-of-school youth covering the full age range (16-21), some are clearly targeted more to younger participants (for example, the alternative education programs) and others to older youth.

OPTION 1: ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Alternative education strategies begin with the premise that the most appropriate employability strategy for out-of-school youth -- especially younger men and women -- is a return to school and achievement of a diploma or GED. In that context, alternative education programs strive to address the institutional and instructional shortcomings of mainstream/traditional school programs and to create an alternative learning environment that will encourage the dropouts and (in the case of in-school youth) potential dropouts to reinvest in their own education.

To accomplish this goal, alternative education programs tend to focus their efforts on ways of improving the social interaction and involvement of students in schools and of engaging them in their academic work more fully. For many young people, dropping out of school is less a matter of academic failure *per se*, and more a matter of being unable to cope in a traditional educational institution. In an early study of High School Redirection in New York, for example, researchers found that the most common reasons young dropouts cited

for leaving school were the unsatisfactory climate of their former schools, fear of gangs and violence, poor relationships with teachers, and a sense of the school as too big and overwhelming. As a result, alternative education programs emphasize smaller class sizes, individualized instruction and competency-based curriculum, student involvement in decision-making, and positive, mutual relationships between students and teachers.¹⁹

Strengths and Weaknesses of an Alternative Education Approach

PROS:

Participants can:

- » improve basic skills and earn a diploma or certificate;
- » improve attendance and accumulate credits; and
- » increase persistence and achieve learning gains.

These programs also provide opportunities for collaboration between the education community and employment and training.

CONS:

- » program development is a challenging/ambitious effort;
- » stakeholders may disagree about vision or goals;
- » it is difficult to develop a truly alternative teaching/learning environment that develops higher order skills necessary for the workforce;
- » recruiting and keeping innovative and committed staff and leadership is hard;
- » older youth accumulate credits too slowly with traditional "seat time" approaches; and
- » balancing innovative pedagogy and employability development is difficult.

Alternative Education Examples:

The following descriptions represent three examples of alternative education strategies. They are included to provide additional information about how such programs are designed and structured. The descriptions can be used as case studies for planners as they study planning elements and issues involved in designing alternative programs in their localities.

¹⁹ The recent evaluation of the High School Redirection Replication Project provides a brief summary of the thinking behind alternative school efforts. See Alexandra T. Weinbaum and Anita Baker, *Final Implementation Report: High School Redirection Replication Project* (Submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor by the Academy for Educational Development, June 1991). Also see Eileen Foley and Susan McConaughy, *Towards School Improvement: Lessons from Alternative High Schools* (NY: Public Education Association, 1982) and Eileen Foley and Peggy Crull, *Educating the At-Risk Adolescent: More Lessons from Alternative High Schools*, (NY: Public Education Association, 1984).

EXAMPLES OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

HIGH SCHOOL REDIRECTION

In response to the need to create alternative schools for out-of-school youth to attain their high school diploma, the United States Department of Labor reviewed high school programs around the country that successfully addressed the educational needs of out-of-school youth or potential dropouts. High School Redirection, an alternative school in Brooklyn, NY, offering a regular high school degree for out-of-school youth, was chosen as a quality program worth replicating. The school is particularly successful with older dropouts, particularly those with low literacy levels. The Department of Labor funded efforts to replicate High School Redirection in seven cities. Cities include: Cincinnati, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, Stockton, and Wichita. The Department of Labor partially funded the schools for a period of two years: 1988-89 and 1989-90, and in the third year the school districts were expected to fully fund the schools.

High School Redirection in Brooklyn

High School Redirection is committed to working with any student who drops out for any reason. It acts as second chance for every student who asks for it. One of the objectives of the replication projects is to set up second chance schools like High School Redirection to act as a bridge between the education and job training systems, where both systems can refer youth who need intensive remedial education. The philosophy of the school is that each student can learn. Staff understand that along with basic skills remediation, they must deal with students' doubt and fear because of past failures.

The heart of the school is the Civil Service Preparation (CSP) or Family Group. This is a class that acts as a surrogate home. It is part counseling group, part family, part academic class. The teacher acts as mentor, parent, advocate, intervener, counselor and friend. CSP curriculum includes parenting, values clarification, job readiness, career exploration, exploration of personal and societal values, personal resource management, citizenship, and orientation to High School Redirection. The CSP group is never new. Instead, as older students graduate, new students come in leaving a continuous core to carry on traditions and convey mores and rules. This allows students the opportunity to take care of one another and to hold one another accountable. School rules include: Respect for One Another, Fair Treatment for Everyone, Free Expression of All Ideas, Prohibition of Ever Putting Anyone Down for Any Reason.

In terms of the overall school curriculum, the school year is divided into four cycles of 9-10 weeks rather than the traditional two semesters. In this way, students are allowed four fresh starts per year and can recover in class and attendance without traditional failure. Classes are not graded traditionally nor are they based on pass/fail. Instead, grading is based on a point system. For example, if a student attends 20 out of 40 days of a class and completes

all assignments on days in attendance, the student might receive 25 out of 50 possible points on his/her report card. Students understand that working at this rate will double the amount of time they will be in school before successfully graduating.

STAR: A special feature of High School Redirection, STAR (Strategies and Techniques for advancement in Reading), is an intensive reading program using immersion techniques for students with a reading level of 6th grade or below. The program is individually tailored based on initial assessment, and deals not only with teaching basic literacy skills but also students' reactions to school failure.

The Replication Sites

The Academy for Educational Development evaluated the implementation of the program at each of the sites. Their findings include the following. Although each school was markedly different in facilities, population targeted, student to teacher ratios, level of resources supplied by the district, leadership and vision provided by the director, etc, similarities included a committed director, child care centers in four of the seven sites, the STAR program implemented in six schools, and a feeling from students that they had developed caring personal relationships with staff. The school sites with the most positive student outcomes were characterized by strong district support for the establishment and continuation of the schools; school leadership that provided a vision for the school; and adequate resources for the school in the form of physical plant, materials and a low student to staff ratio.

Five Areas Critical to Achieving Positive School and Student Outcomes

1) **City and District Context and Support** where the district saw the school as filling a need in dropout prevention or retrieval; had already committed to alternative programs; and was willing to commit sufficient resources to support implementation costs. Unsupportive districts were not willing to allocate sufficient funds or resources to operate the school with appropriate staff levels, space or materials or were not committed to the implementation of the school. Problems also arose if the school fell under several jurisdictions with conflicting agendas.

2) **Good School Leadership** which includes: the ability to generate and communicate a vision of where the school is going and how to get there; the ability to promote and educate staff on the vision and achieve staff buy-in; the ability to forward the action plan and move toward the vision; the ability to take advantage of opportunities to gain the maximum resources possible from both the district and the larger community; the ability to coordinate the evolution of the program and problem-solve effectively; the ability to understand the academic, social and personal needs of the students and ensure that staff also understand their needs; and the ability to advocate for the school through the media, political leadership and other resources.

3) Small Size, Community and Vision. Small size allows close, caring relationships to develop between adults and students and teachers have the opportunity to act as mentors, advisers and friends. It also counteracts problems usually associated with leaving school such as social isolation and insufficient attention paid to students' personal problems and learning needs. Besides small size, a sense of community where important student bonding may occur is also important to effective alternative school programming. By community, AED meant shared goals and visions, a school culture which exemplifies these goals and visions, opportunities to review and renew the goals and vision, collegial, supportive relationships among adults in the school and an expanded role for the teachers as mentors and advisors to students.

4) Academic Program. The level of innovation and experimentation in curriculum and instructional methods affected student outcomes. Sites differed in how much the curriculum varied from standard, district curriculum; however, few school made significant changes in the curriculum or its delivery from standard, district curriculum. As for instructional methods, the emphasis on individualized learning was the major innovation in instruction at all sites. Individualized instruction meant that students proceeded through the standard curriculum at their own pace; it did not mean that learner needs were assessed and curriculum and instruction was adjusted to meet these learner needs.

Another important element was the relationship of the curriculum to employment. Despite the fact that demonstration schools saw employment and post-secondary education as a major goals, the sites still have significant gaps between school and work. Sites had attempted to integrate school and work by linking with a vocational school where students would take vocational courses; courses would provide students with pre-employment skills; with opportunities for career exploration; and/or providing students with work experience. One school, Stockton, did go the step further to integrating work materials into the academic classes and vice versa.

5) Community Employment, Vocational and Post-secondary Linkages. Critical to the success of every site was the building of relationships with a range of community agencies that provided services beyond what the school could provide. Expanded supportive services that sites were able to offer through linkages included: medical referrals to an adolescent health clinic; family planning through Planned Parenthood; personal counseling; conflict resolution between gang members; services to children of migrant workers; services to students' families; parenting programs; funds for post-secondary and vocational education or job placement for graduates, etc.

For More Information

David Lah, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Development, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W. 20201, (202) 219-5782

Publications

Alexandra T. Weinbaum and Anita Baker, *Final Implementation Report: High School Redirection Replication Project* (New York: Academy for Educational Development, June 1991)

EXAMPLE OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

JOBS FOR YOUTH/BOSTON

Founded in the 1976, Jobs for Youth began as a pre-employment/work maturity placement program for at-risk youth. Since then it has expanded its reach by increasing the emphasis on basic skills remediation and longer-term interventions. Today, Jobs for Youth, a private, non-profit agency, offers an array of services to assist in the development of at-risk youths' basic skills and employability skills. The program's goal is to help young people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become productive, self-sufficient, independent citizens. Jobs for Youth combines a comprehensive program of education, training, and job placement and has prepared over 10,000 young people in the Boston area for employment in private-sector jobs. The agency is funded by public contracts, United Way, and over 100 foundation, corporate and individual supporters.

Jobs for Youth concentrates its services in two major areas: education and employment. The program recognizes that the youth they serve need basic skills remediation and some exposure to the world of work. Through its combination of services, Jobs for Youth has assisted thousands of young dropouts and at-risk youth to upgrade their basic skills, develop their employability skills, and find employment where they can apply the skills learned.

Education Programs

A combination of individual and small group instruction is tailored to each student's needs. Classes meet mornings, afternoons and evenings. Students may postpone employment to work on academic skills, or study and work at the same time. Students who wish to earn a high school equivalency certificate may enroll in the GED program. Those who prefer a high school diploma may enter the JFY alternative high school. The high school curriculum is competency-based with over forty electives and special academic and support services. Eligible youth must be between 16-22 and have a minimum of 30 credits plus a sixth grade reading level. The GED program serves 16-22 year old out-of-school youth with reading levels between 4.0 and 7.5. JFY has had high retention rates for its education programs. These rates can be attributed to small class sizes and a high teacher-to-pupil ratio that allows for the individual, one-on-one attention these youth need. In addition, the programs are more flexible than traditional high schools and provide extensive counseling, which is critical for many of the youth coming to JFY.

Jobs for Youth also encourages students to pursue further academic or vocational training. JFY High Students are eligible for ACCESS, the Boston Plan for Excellence program that provides college counseling and scholarships.

Employment Programs

Employment programs include the Academy for Career Excellence (ACE), job readiness workshops, job placement services and ACE Career Training Programs. The Academy for Career Excellence (ACE) prepares young workers for the labor market by working with employers to identify appropriate entry-level jobs and define skills and training needed to succeed in those jobs. The three-tier ACE structure begins with academic skills, entry-level job placement and support services; proceeds to occupational skills training; and ends with career-ladder employment in selected occupations.

The job readiness workshop, Career Skills 101, is a three-week job readiness workshop which prepares young adults to understand and meet the expectations of employers. The workshop covers interviewing, completing job applications, interpersonal skills, teamwork, decision-making, problem solving, conflict resolution and other skills needed on the job.

Job-ready candidates are referred to positions developed by JFY's job developers. After placement, JFY staff monitor clients' job performance and help resolve problems. Continuing follow-up and support ensure the best possible work experience for the client and the most productive worker for the employer.

ACE Training Programs

Once youth have mastered the basic skills and job readiness skills necessary for success in the labor market, JFY has developed several Career Training Programs to provide them the more advanced occupational skills development. JFY, New England Medical Center, Genetics Institute, Boston University and Boston Technical Center are collaborating to train young adults for careers in the growing biomedical industry. Biomedical Careers is a 28-week training program for entry-level jobs in biomedical research and manufacturing. Participants learn chemistry, biology, mathematics, medical terminology, computer skills and laboratory techniques. Graduates are qualified for jobs in university and hospital laboratories and in commercial biotechnology companies.

Jobs for Youth has also established partnerships with area hospitals to prepare candidates for careers in the allied health fields. The hospitals assist in developing program guidelines and curricula and provide job opportunities for candidates who successfully complete the program. Finally, Jobs for Youth has developed the IBM Job Training Center using computers and typewriters donated by IBM to train participants in word and data processing, office procedures and office English. Graduates will be qualified for office jobs in banking and financial services, universities, insurance, health care and other industries.

For More Information

Gary Kaplan, Director, Jobs for Youth, 312 Stuart Street, Boston, MA 02116, (617) 338-0815

EXAMPLE OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

YOUNG ADULT LEARNING ACADEMY

The Youth Adult Learning Academy (YALA) offers educational services to out-of-school youth in New York City. Founded in 1984, YALA provides services to the neediest youth in New York City -- those with very low basic skills, those living in poverty, those without a high school diploma or GED, those with little or no exposure to the world of work. To date, YALA has served over 4,000 students between the ages of 16 and 24 who read between the fourth and eighth grade levels. Their low reading levels make these youth ineligible for most GED and JTPA programs. All YALA students are economically disadvantaged. Twenty-nine percent are parents; 16% are in foster care; 71% have completed 10th grade or less. Over half are 19 years or younger. Many have not had much contact with adult role models who have been consistently employed.

YALA's primary goals for its students include: to increase their potential for employment; to prepare them for direct training for the GED test and for skills training programs; and to establish a foundation for further formal education and lifelong self-education. YALA students alternate two weeks at school with two weeks in work experience for a nine-month term.

YALA's structure was designed to attract and retain out-of-school youth. Originally established to develop the literacy skills of out-of-school youth with poor reading skills, YALA has continually broadened its academic and social supports in order to build skills. Through City Works, a program of the New York City Department of Employment, YALA has been able to coordinate with independent agencies contracted by DOE to recruit and screen the young people who attend YALA. These agencies are required to place participants in jobs at the end of the program. This collaboration between YALA and the independent agencies allows YALA to offer a comprehensive set of services where YALA concentrates on providing educational services while the independent agencies offer counseling and placement in jobs.

Another important program design element is communication between counselors and teachers. Since both parties see different dimensions of a student, frequent and open communication among staff is important, so that each staff member dealing with a student has a clear vision of the whole student and not just the part they come in contact with everyday. Counselors receive daily reports of student attendance so that they can follow up on absences immediately. They also have access to classes and to YALA's extensive database about students.

Curriculum

Realizing that teaching young adult dropouts presents special challenges, staff continually revise the instructional program, observing and asking for extensive feedback from the previous year's class. First and foremost, YALA emphasizes the importance of a high school diploma and an education to self-sufficiency and success in life.

Students attend classes four days and twenty hours per week, with the fifth day being reserved for training sessions in job search and job retention skills conducted by the independent agency counselor. Students cannot be placed in jobs until they have met YALA's requirements for academic class attendance. The curriculum stresses accountability with students preparing weekly summaries of class work and teachers preparing biweekly progress reports for students and counselors.

To retain interest, YALA makes frequent use of primary source reading materials and students are asked to write regularly. Even the math program requires students to write and read extensively about the history of math and its uses. Active learning, utilizing a variety of skills, is encouraged, and students are motivated by opportunities to present their thoughts and ideas using school publications, videotapes and speeches. Along with four academic classes, students are allowed to take one occupational class at YALA per day. The occupational classes help to strengthen the connection between learning in school and performing on the job.

Assessment of students progress is based on a system of benchmarking. Students strive for each of three levels of academic competence, achieved by completing assessments for each level. In this way, students can chart their progress on the way to attaining their GED.

YALA has also instituted a portfolio assessment system that documents what each student can do. They are working on developing this portfolio system into a system that charts a student's progress and development. The portfolio would include samples of project work demonstrating multiple competencies rather than just worksheets and checklists.

YALA has continued to develop support services based on input from students and staff, as well as research on the needs of its population. Some of the support services include on-site child care, a new federally funded effort focused on substance abuse called COOL (Choosing Our Own Lives), and YALA's privately funded Family Support Office, which continues to broaden its activities. In addition, an extensive program of activities to build cultural understanding and identity is being developed.

School as a Community

Besides collaborating with independent agencies to offer comprehensive services around education and employment and structuring the curriculum to most effectively serve out-of-school youth, YALA has also designed the school to act as a community providing students with the support, encouragement and feeling of belonging they need to succeed. The school is made up of houses. Each YALA house has about 90 students, a single group of teachers, common rooms and common counselors. The house is of a small enough size so that students and staff can all get to know one another and feel comfortable and at home. In addition, students are asked to assist in some of the work of the program and in solving problems that may come up. In this way responsibility and a feeling of empowerment are fostered and allowed to grow.

For More Information

Peter Kleinbard, Executive Director, Young Adult Learning Academy, 320 East 96th Street, New York, NY 10128, (212) 348-7006.

Publications

Peter Kleinbard, "The Young Adult Learning Academy: A Program for Youth Who Are Out of School," *Equity and Choice*, V, No. 3 (May, 1989)

Option 2: Youth/Work Strategies

While alternative education programs provide a strong focus on educational skills for younger dropouts, a growing number of programs are focusing on productive work and worksite training as the foundation of employability development, particularly for older out-of-school youth. The array of efforts that we are grouping together as "Youth/Work" strategies are programs that, in varying degrees, use real, "productive" work (generally in small teams with close adult supervision) as a means of building work habits and attitudes, basic skills, occupational skills, self-esteem and a sense of community responsibility. What links these strategies together and distinguishes them from other approaches is the degree to which they are work-focused. While all provide a relatively comprehensive mix of services, the **process of working** is seen as the core instructional tool and the shaping experience for participants.

Strengths and Weaknesses

PROS:

Participants can:

- » develop solid work ethics;
- » experience responsibility to wider community;
- » learn about the process and products of work; and
- » build work experience.

CONS:

- » focus is on work and service, not on training for long-term careers;
- » the impact on education/basic skills may be limited;
- » design can result in tension between work and education;
- » programs are expensive (\$20,000-\$22,000 per slot);
- » attrition rates are often high; and
- » support services are often limited.

Youth/Work Program Examples

The program examples that follow represent a range of approaches to the Youth/Work strategy.

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH/WORK PROGRAM

YOUTH SERVICE CORPS

Within the broad category of Youth/Work programs, there is substantial variation, both in philosophy and goals, and in the mix and delivery of services. Two basic approaches stand out. The first might best be characterized as the "Service Corps" strategy. Drawing on models dating back to the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, service corps programs are designed to combine youth development with the provision of quality work of benefit to the broader community. The major characteristics of these programs are (1) an emphasis on hard, productive work, and (2) youth working in small crews (10-15 members) under close adult supervision. Generally participants take part in an intense, early orientation and training program (not unlike a "boot camp") and then join a crew for up to a year of relatively unskilled work on projects of public benefit. Depending on the program, participants are generally required to take some educational courses if they are not high school graduates or demonstrate poor basic skills. Pay is minimal, though most make some provision for gradual merit increases, and several programs (such as New York's *City Volunteer Corps*) have established sophisticated incentive programs that include bonuses for those staying in the program for over 6 months and/or scholarships in lieu of salary. In the traditional service corps models (such as the *California Conservation Corps*), the focus is on conservation work -- fire prevention and suppression, energy conservation, park development, reforestation, etc. More recently, there has been a substantial growth in urban corps models (including the *City Volunteer Corps* and the *Urban Corps Expansion Project*) that focus on urban public works (cleaning vacant lots, building rehabilitation and weatherization) and volunteer work with human service agencies.²⁰

Strengths and Weaknesses. What is important to note in reviewing the service corps programs is that their primary goals are the transmittal of positive social and civic values -- particularly the development of a solid work ethic -- and the development of a feeling of responsibility to the wider community to involvement in productive work. The true strength of the service corps has been their success in teaching the work process -- training youth in discipline and hard work, providing a work history, reinforcing social values through team work, and providing a critical sense of accomplishment, discipline, and personal responsibility. For out-of-school youth who have had little opportunity to experience a sense of competence and meaningful work, service corps can offer a unique and valuable experience.

²⁰ Much of the descriptive and evaluative work on service corps has been conducted by Public/Private Ventures in Philadelphia. The material in this section draws on a number of their reports. Those include: Alvia Branch, Sally Liederman, and Thomas J. Smith, *Youth Conservation and Service Corps: Findings from a National Evaluation* (1987); David Lah and Wendy Wolf, *The California Conservation Corps: A Report on Implementation* (1985); Richard Voith and Sally Liederman, *The California Conservation Corps: A Report on Attrition* (1986); Wendy Wolf, Sally Liederman, Richard Voith, *The California Conservation Corps: An Analysis of Short-Term Impacts on Participants* (1987); Public/Private Ventures, "The New York City Volunteer Corps: Interim Report of an Assessment" (1990).

At the same time, it is also important to recognize the limits of the approach. While most corps will provide some degree of skills training (and all are designed to teach basic work skills), the focus of service corps efforts is on work and service, not training and preparation for long term careers. Service corps programs have been shown to provide at least short-term post-program earnings gains for disadvantaged participants, but they are not occupational training programs, nor do they provide much assistance generally with post-program job placement. Though a growing proportion of service corps now include some educational services as part of their program (GED classes or adult basic skills, for example), these educational components tend to have a relatively limited impact. As a recent summary of service corps studies noted, there is an ongoing tension between the goals of youth development and productive work. Time spent on education is time taken away from work, and few corps have, in the words of one evaluation, "developed an optimal approach."

Services corps are also a relatively resource intensive approach. In the late 1980s, one report estimated an average cost per slot at \$20-22,000, which includes wages and, in residential programs, food and housing. Though the evaluations of the California Conservation Corps indicate that the public benefit from the program does tend to equal or exceed the program cost, the scale of required expenditure may simply be too large for some communities and/or states. On the other hand, at least a few programs are beginning to offset the relatively high cost of operations by providing service corps services on a fee-for-service basis to local communities.

During the past few years, the number of service corps programs has rapidly expanded. As of 1987, there were 28 year-round youth corps programs in operation, and with the passage of the 1990 National and Community Service Corps Act, it seems likely that the numbers have grown substantially since then. At the same time, it is important to recognize that service corps are clearly not for everyone. The evaluation data for the California Conservation Corps and several other programs show a consistently high attrition rate, with as much as 20% of the participants leaving in the first month (most of them in the first week), and more than half leaving by midway through the program cycle. While high attrition rates are common in programs serving out-of-school youth, they do point to the need to make an effort to match program approach and participants as carefully as possible, and they highlight the fact that the service corps strategy is likely to work better for some youth than others.

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH/WORK STRATEGIES

YOUTHBUILD

YouthBuild, growing out of the Youth Action Program in East Harlem in 1988 and already extending to 42 states, is a program committed to enabling young people to rebuild their communities and take charge of their own lives. In YouthBuild programs, young people with an interest in rebuilding their communities are trained in construction skills for six to eighteen months while they rehabilitate abandoned buildings to provide affordable permanent housing for homeless or very low income people. In rural areas, they construct new housing. YouthBuild serves the least job ready, unemployed urban youth who need intensive services in basic skills remediation, employability skills development and supportive services.

YouthBuild sites accept youth between the ages of 17 and 25, the majority being over 20. In an assessment of five of the programs, the Ford Foundation found that 80% of the students were male, 53% were from families living on welfare, 88% were black, 36% were parents and 76% did not possess their high school diploma or GED. These youth have not developed the basic skills necessary to succeed in the labor market, and they have had little or no exposure to the world of work or the behaviors and attitudes expected of them on the job.

YouthBuild is based on a model where youth work in small crews and receive intensive work experiences for half their time and spend the other half in classroom training. In this way, students understand the link between basic skills and a high school diploma and success on the job. Students alternate weeks going to classes mastering basic skills and working toward their GED or high school diploma and gaining on the job training in carpentry by renovating abandoned housing in low income neighborhoods. Also built into the program are individual counseling, peer support groups, driver's license training, recreation, and cultural activities.

Major emphasis is placed on providing opportunities for young people to develop as leaders through making decisions affecting the program and its policies, through involvement in community life, and through leadership training. YouthBuild's goals are to build youths' self-respect, teach them leadership skills and help them take control of their lives. Youth are encouraged to stay in their communities and work to effect change there.

At the end of the program, graduates obtain unsubsidized jobs in the construction industry where they earn from \$6.00 to \$18.00 an hour. Follow-up counseling and support groups are available.

The program is comprehensive and has reported substantial success with youth who have dropped out of school, since it offers them opportunities to take on useful and respected roles in their community, building the most essential commodity needed by their families and neighbors: affordable housing. While the program serves a majority of young men, it also works well for young women interested in non-traditional careers.

For More Information

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EXAMPLE OF YOUTH/WORK PROGRAM

CORPORATION FOR YOUTH ENERGY CORPS

Corporation for Youth Energy Corps (YEC) is a work-based learning program for school dropouts, ages 16-19. YEC is housed in a facility owned by Argus Community, Inc., a multi-service South Bronx non-profit which offers alternative education programs for at-risk youth. YEC's twelve month curriculum includes basic skills education from licensed teachers at Argus community, worksite training in window installations and energy auditing, and ongoing counseling and job placement assistance from YEC staff.

YEC is designed to address the needs of school dropouts by providing them with job and academic skills that will enable them to lead productive lives. The program is based on the premise that most young people want to work, even those who are unfamiliar with the workplace and may not be acquainted with gainfully employed adults. YEC's young people learn to work and work well when they are assigned to meaningful jobs, put under the supervision of competent adults and paid the hourly minimum wage for their work.

All YEC participants are school dropouts and all of them live at or below the poverty level. Upon entering the program, some of them read at or below a fifth-grade level and some are involved in the juvenile justice system. They are the least job ready youth, who need an intensive mix of basic skills remediation, work experience and supportive services in order to become self-sufficient.

Basic Skills Education

YEC understands that in order to secure and maintain jobs, once they leave the program, YEC participants will need a GED. Accordingly, YEC maintains a no school/no work policy. Since the basic skills instruction and the worksite training complement one another, participants reach the understanding that the cognitive skills they develop in the classroom are as essential to getting the job done as the tools they use. YEC structures basic skills education so that youth see the practical connection between school and work.

The cognitive skills participants acquire in the classroom are put to practical use at the worksites. The carryover from the classroom to the worksite also works in reverse. Basic math, computer training and reading materials on weatherization and energy conservation are part of the classroom curriculum. Here again, the aim is to establish an interaction between school and work.

Worksite Training

Working in small crews in which the ratio of crew to crewleader is never more than 6 to 1, participants are trained to install and repair windows in low income buildings that serve as YEC worksites. At the worksites, participants, earning the minimum wage, are able to develop a close rapport with the crewleaders who serve as both trainers and role models for the participants. Recently YEC work has expanded to doing home energy audits and home insulation in a pilot project aimed at reducing the energy consumption in one to four-family homes.

Ongoing Counseling and Job Placement

At least once every other week, participants confer on a one-to-one basis with either the job developer/counselor or their assigned crewleader. The purpose of these "benchmarking" conferences is for participants to evaluate their overall progress. Every participant is required to fill out a Workplan Agreement at the beginning of the program stating their short-term and long-term objectives and how they expect to achieve them. During subsequent "benchmarking" sessions, they review their Workplan Agreement and update them to insure that they follow through on commitments.

YEC also equips participants with job search skills that permit these young people to find jobs on their own. Through lecture and role play, participants learn to: fill out job applications, write resumes and cover letters, read the want ads, solicit jobs by phone and through the mail, and succeed on job interviews. The aim is for participants to find suitable employment through their own efforts. However, the job developer/counselor does provide traditional placement services for participants who need additional assistance in finding employment.

YEC uses an intensive work experience to turn youth who have failed in traditional learning environments on to education. By engaging participants in meaningful work under close and competent supervision and by making classroom instruction relevant to the jobs they perform at the worksite, YEC motivates these youth to learn. As a result, these youth experience successes in the classroom, as well as at the worksite and they are able to see the connection between the two. In addition to ensuring they receive the education that they need to succeed, YEC also provides them with high tech training that will enable them to obtain meaningful and stable employment in upwardly mobile jobs.

For More Information

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Option 3:

COMPREHENSIVE INTER-AGENCY PROGRAMS

The third broad group of strategies might best be characterized simply as "comprehensive programs." Perhaps the most common of program approaches, comprehensive programs contrast with alternative education and youth/work strategies in providing a relatively balanced mix of classroom basic skills, occupational training and/or work experience, labor market preparation and job placement, and supportive services. Comprehensive programs are in many ways the most flexible approach to serving out-of-school youth, allowing providers and participants to mix and match different packages of training services and options, often from a variety of organizations. But they also tend to be the least intensive and well-integrated of the available approaches and run the greatest risk that participants will "fall through the cracks" in moving from one set of services to another. As such, they require careful management and oversight if they are to be effective.

While the basic characteristic of the comprehensive approach is the provision of a balanced mix of services, programs within this category vary tremendously in the actual mix of services and in the ways in which they are organized. Among the thirteen *JOBSTART* demonstration sites, for example, some programs delivered the full range of education and employment services in-house, while others used a "brokered" approach in which participants were referred to other organizations for specific services.

Programs also differ in the sequencing of service delivery, with some programs requiring participants to complete an educational program (or achieve specific achievement levels) before entering occupational training (the "sequential" model) and others providing education and training along concurrent, parallel tracks (the "concurrent" approach). When programs for young parents are added into the mix, further variety can be seen. Both *Project Redirection* (not to be confused with High School Redirection) and *New Chance* place heavy emphasis on provision of an array of health and supportive services -- child care, health and nutrition, parenting and life management skills, etc. *Project Redirection*, which focused on younger women (age 14-17) also placed a heavier emphasis on educational services and return to school than did programs for older out-of-school youth.²¹

²¹ Each of the programs discussed in this section have been the subjects of formal research and evaluation efforts. See the individual program descriptions that follow for listings of the various published research reports.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Because of the variety of program approaches within this service option, it is not easy to catalogue general pros and cons. Each of the broad program strategies outlined here has its own strengths and weaknesses, as do each of the individual program examples. They vary in terms of their focus on education or employment, in the organization of their services, in the intensity of the interventions they offer, and in their approach to building long-term employability skills. While all build on the notion of a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of out-of-school youth, each will clearly appeal to different age groups and individuals; some will be more successful with some youth than others.

Comprehensive Inter-agency Program Examples. The program descriptions that follow provide information on a number of the major efforts to implement and evaluate comprehensive program efforts.

EXAMPLE OF COMPREHENSIVE INTER-AGENCY PROGRAM

MINORITY FEMALE SINGLE PARENT DEMONSTRATION CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

From 1982 to 1987, the Rockefeller Foundation provided funding to selected community-based organizations (CBOs) to operate employment and training programs for minority single mothers. About half of the participants were dropouts and only half had ever worked, with wages averaging less than \$5.00 per hour. Two-thirds of participants had children under six and 40% had children under three. Seventy per cent of participants were receiving public assistance at the time of application, and 25% had been on welfare steadily for at least three years.

Services included basic skills education in reading, math and communication skills; job-skill training; job-search training and job placement; child-care assistance; and counseling and other support services to help participants attain long-term and stable employment. Four demonstration projects -- Atlanta, GA; San Jose, CA; Providence, RI; and Washington D.C. were evaluated for results from operating the program from 1982-1987.

The Rockefeller Foundation specified the project goal -- to provide services that would enable participants to attain employment above the minimum wage -- and the target group -- minority single mothers, but allowed the CBOs a great deal of discretion in how to meet the goal. Training programs could be categorized into two general models of employment training: 1) occupational skills training, with instruction and practice in the skills required for specific jobs; and 2) general employability training, to enhance general preparedness for further training or employment by upgrading basic educational skills, motivation, decision-making, and job-market orientation.

The Center for Employment Training (CET)

The Center for Employment Training in San Jose, CA showed the greatest impact in terms of employment and earnings. CET emphasized very practical occupational skills geared specifically to the demands of a particular job. In addition, participants received basic skills remediation; however, no minimum educational skill competencies were required as a condition for participation in the program's job-training component. CET's success may be attributed to both programmatic and organizational factors.

One critical component of the program was the training design, which emphasized training for all regardless of educational skill levels and offered remedial education within the context of job skills training. Other sites provided basic skills remediation before job skills training. The components of this integrated model include:

- » All participants are placed directly into the job-specific skill training course of their choice. There are no tests or entrance requirements.
- » Basic skills remediation is integrated with occupational skills training. This means more than just attending basic skills and job skill training concurrently; instead participants are taught basic skills as they directly pertain to job skills training.
- » The job training program is developed based on local employer's needs and relies on instructors with direct experience in industry.
- » Support services, such as child care and counseling, are available and convenient.

CET's occupational skills training program was designed based on this integrated model to effectively serve participants with a range of educational skills and allow participants to move through the curriculum at their own pace. No entry tests were administered and there were no competency requirements for entry into individual training courses. Deficiencies in basic skills were addressed in the context of job skills training so that participants learned skills in functional context.

In addition, CET offered a wide range of training options and used a variety of techniques to keep participants and the program focused and motivated on the end goal -- a job. Examples of these techniques include: organizing training to simulate workplace conditions; using instructors with direct industry experience; working closely with employers to develop training based on their needs; providing skill offerings based on demand; offering an open-entry, open-exit program; and using a self-paced, competency-based curriculum. In addition, child care, counseling and assistance in obtaining support services were provided at the training site.

As a result of these programmatic and organizational factors, CET showed substantial positive gains in terms of employment and earnings for its participants. At CET, 46% of the treatment group members were employed by the fourth quarter, while only 36% of the control group members were working (a 27% increase in employment). In addition, treatment group members earned an average of \$416 per month, while control group members earned an average of \$238 per month (a 47% increase in earnings). These gains were considerably larger than the projects offering more traditional services, such as job-search assistance and community work experience, sequentially with basic skills remediation.

For More Information

The Rockefeller Foundation, Equal Opportunity Program, 1133 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, (212) 869-8500

Center for Employment Training, 701 Vine Street, San Jose, CA 95110, (408) 287-7924

Publications

Anne Gordon and John Burghart, *The Minority Female Single Parent Demonstration: Short-Term Economic Impacts* (NY: Rockefeller Foundation, 1990).

John Burghart and Anne Gordon, *More Jobs and Higher Pay: How and Integrated Program Compares with Traditional Programs* (NY: Rockefeller Foundation, 1990)

EXAMPLE OF COMPREHENSIVE INTER-AGENCY PROGRAM

PROJECT NEW CHANCE

New Chance is an innovative national demonstration that assists disadvantaged teenage mothers and their children achieve economic self-sufficiency as well as optimal physical and psychological development. The program's objectives include: increasing participants' educational and vocational skill levels and their ability to attain stable employment; enabling participants to control their fertility; lessening dependence on public assistance and assisting participants to escape poverty; enhancing parenting, communication and other life management skills; and improving the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of participants' children. The New Chance program offers a variety of services including education, occupational skills training, parenting and health education, childcare, and counseling to achieve its objectives. The New Chance model has been implemented in 10 states at 16 selected sites, which will serve as models for other states and organizations interested in developing similar programs. Funding comes from a consortium of federal, state, and local government agencies, private corporations, and foundations.

Mix of Services

The program offers comprehensive, intensive, long-term services to young mothers between the ages of 17 and 21 who are economically disadvantaged, the majority of whom receive AFDC and have dropped out of school. Services can be broken down into four areas: education, employment, health and personal development, and services to participants' children. Education services begin as soon as a young mother enters the program with basic skills classes that prepare the participant for the GED. The employment services are arranged sequentially so that participants first learn about different career options and the skills and work habits needed to attain and retain employment in these jobs. Next, participants try out these work skills and behaviors in short-term work experience positions or internships. Finally, participants are enrolled in vocational education training courses and focus on a chosen field of interest, learning the more specific skills required.

The health and personal development component is provided through a variety of classes and workshops on effective contraception; health care for themselves and their children; effective parenting both in terms of physical needs of children and also cognitive, social and emotional needs. In addition, life management workshops cover such topics as time management, decision-making, assertiveness, budgeting, and the use of community resources. Another critical element of the program is assistance in securing reliable childcare that address the developmental needs of the children.

Case Management

In order to successfully provide this comprehensive mix of services over an extended period of time, New Chance programs rely on careful case management, where each participant is assigned a counselor who provides one-on-one guidance, support, advocacy and encouragement. The case manager ensures that the participant receives the most appropriate mix of services, that the quality of services is high, and that the participant is making progress toward attainable goals. Participants usually meet formally with case managers at least once per week and have frequent informal interactions in class, group workshops and other activities.

In-Program and Post-Program Services

The New Chance model is designed as a long term intervention, including both in-program and post-program services. In-program services can last up to 18 months and end when a participant finishes training and is placed in an unsubsidized job or goes on to more advanced skills training or education. Post-program services continue from 6 months to 1 year of placement or entry into more advanced training or education. These services may include counseling, assistance in finding childcare, jobs, or referrals to other agencies for additional services.

In-Program services are usually offered on-site, using a one-stop shopping model. This allows case managers to spend more time on personal counseling and less time on brokering services and reduces the mother's burden of obtaining services from several different agencies, which can be time consuming, frustrating and confusing. Education and occupational skills training are offered in a supportive but demanding environment. Participants to case manager ratios are kept low (15-25 participants per case manager) to ensure adequate personal attention and counseling, and staff work hard to create an open, safe and comfortable environment for participants. At the same time, participants are expected to display a high level of commitment, attending classes and workshops for 5 to 6 hours a day, four days per week.

Following a general orientation, New Chance programs begin with an intensive, short-term group of employment-related activities combined with workshops on family planning and other health education topics, parenting and life management. Upon completion of this component (one to four weeks), participants focus on education and occupational skills training.

Again, some sites offer basic skills remediation and occupational skills concurrently; others require participants to complete basic skills training before moving on to occupational skills training. Groups workshops continue as a supplement to the education and skills training components. In the final phase, participants receive job search assistance, individual counseling, and information and referral services.

Education

The education component focuses on the attainment of the GED. Instruction is individualized and self-paced with math and English assessment tests used to make decisions on where participant should start or what type of classes she needs. Classroom work includes completing workbook exercises and, in some cases, computer-assisted instruction. At most sites, educational curricula are not integrated into vocational training.

Training and Employment

Employment training includes exposing participants to the world of work and the types of jobs that could support their families. In addition, participants learn about the general expectations of employers in terms of work habits and behaviors. Skills are taught in a variety of ways: career exposure activities such as vocational testing, field trips and speakers; classes and workshops on employability development (i.e. how to write a resume); lectures and discussions about various work-related concerns; and hands-on experience through internships. More specific occupational skills training are taught through vocational education courses offered at local community colleges, nonprofit training centers, publicly funded technical schools, and for-profit proprietary schools.

For More Information

Manpower Demonstration and Research Corporation, Three Park Avenue,
New York, NY 10016, (212) 532-3200

Publications

Janet Quint and Cynthia Guy, *New Chance: Lessons from the Pilot Phase* (NY: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1989)

Janet Quint, Barbara L. Fink, Sharon L. Rowser, *New Chance: Implementing a Comprehensive Program for Disadvantaged Young Mothers and Their Children* (NY: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1991)

**PART FIVE
ASSESSMENT TOOL:
ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING**

Effective programs should implement several standard qualities. Specific elements are related to program success, does your program implement the following program strategies?

YES	NO	ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS
		Small Size
		Egalitarian Culture
		Participatory Decision-Making
		Organizational Flexibility
		Success-Based Learning
		Comprehensive Goals
		Caring and Committed Staff
		A Safe Learning Environment
		Personalized Instruction
		Low/Student/Teacher Ratio
		Program Flexibility (i.e Hours Or Curriculum)
		Identification Of Potential Dropouts
		Modified Academic Curriculum
		Counseling
		Vocational Education/Work Experience
		Student Incentives
		Other:

PART SIX
MOVING BEYOND PROGRAMMING:
BUILDING A COMMUNITY YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

One of the major changes to take place in employment and training policy over the last ten years has been the effort to focus services on more at-risk youth and to develop the comprehensive service strategies needed to address the needs of those young people. That effort, in turn, is prompting growing numbers of communities to take a fresh look at the organization and delivery of services at the local level and to begin building new, community-wide, multi-institutional strategies that address not only employability development per se, but the often related issues of educational achievement, teen parenting, substance abuse, economic growth, and community development.

For many communities, the development of this type of "comprehensive, community-wide" approach is a critical first step towards effectively serving today's disadvantaged youth. Only through some form of collaboration can communities begin to develop the comprehensive program strategies that address the multiple needs of many youth (by linking work, education, support services, etc.) or establish the sequence of services needed to help young people move towards employability over time. Joint planning and action at the community level are equally necessary for communities to make effective use of the limited resources available for serving disadvantaged youth.

But for most communities, the development of an effective youth employability strategy also represents a substantial political and institutional challenge. At the heart of any community-wide effort is a call for institutional change. For a comprehensive system to succeed, schools, employment and training providers, social service agencies, and area businesses all need to change many of their traditional ways of doing business and begin operating under a common vision and shared set of goals.

As the emphasis on community-wide strategies grows, it is increasingly important for policy-makers at both the state and local level to understand the kinds of activities and commitments required to create a community-wide employability strategy and to move that agenda forward. Lessons from the New Futures initiative -- a five city demonstration project aimed at developing community strategies for at-risk youth, including the development of community-wide strategies for employability development will be highlighted. The "lessons" outlined here are based on a series of individual interviews and

focus group discussions with representatives of the New Futures cities. The questions guiding these discussions were: How had the New Futures communities attempted to build a community-wide employability strategy, and in particular, what were their different starting points? What problems had they encountered? And what were the lessons they learned along the way?²²

THREE BROAD LESSONS

The first is that **the development of a community-wide strategy is an essentially political task** -- one whose success or failure depends in large part on presence of strong local leaders and the local capacity to define a common agenda, involve appropriate members of the community, negotiate common interests and concerns, and develop accountability across institutions. To meet these challenges, communities and their leaders need to pay serious attention to and make a significant and ongoing investment in *process*. While "technical" issues (concerning funding, conflicting rules, etc.) abound (and are often seen as significant barriers), policy makers need to recognize that the major challenges are the political tasks of building a shared vision and maintaining the community support needed for institutional change.

The second major lesson is that **developing a successful community-wide strategy is hard**. In pursuing institutional change, communities often have to address very fundamental issues of race, community governance and the control of local decision-making, differing attitudes and values towards youth, and the community's investment in education and training. None are issues quickly or easily raised and resolved. Here again, the issue of leadership is paramount. To build support for a common community vision and strategy in this context takes active and committed leaders who are willing to take risks and who have made a long term commitment. The *New Futures* communities discussed in this paper are beginning their fifth year of work on community-wide strategies, and most would readily admit that they are just now beginning to achieve the trust and clarity of vision needed to build a coherent local strategy.

²² In each of the five cities, staff from the Center for Human Resources at Brandeis University met with key policy leaders, agency administrators, and program practitioners for extended individual and group interviews. Brandeis then worked with a smaller group of city representatives to review and refine the major themes from those meetings. The findings from this process were initially presented as a workshop on "Institutional Change Through a Community-Wide Youth Employability Strategy," at the National Governors' Association Policy Conference, "Investing in Youth," in New Orleans, December 10, 1992. Working group members included Susan P. Curnan, Director, and Alan Melchior, Deputy Director, Center for Human Resources, Brandeis University; Paul Berry, Chair, Arkansas State Job Training Coordinating Council; Susan Brownlee, Associate Director, Allegheny Policy Council for Youth and Workforce Development; Tom Dalton, City Manager, Little Rock, AK; Bill Daniel, Vice President and General Manager, Dan Vaden Companies and Chairman, Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce; Kathy Emery, Executive Director, New Futures for Dayton Area Youth, Maria Mojica, Executive Director, Bridgeport Futures, and Miriam Shark, Senior Associate, Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Finally, the third major lesson is that **the issues of youth and employability development -- and the starting points for collaboration -- are defined differently in every community.** For some communities, the primary concern may be with future workforce development; in others the focus might be on dropout prevention, youth violence or teenage parenting. The major point here is that there is no one "right" way to approach these issues -- no one model or approach that can serve every community. Rather, each community needs to define "the problem" it wants to solve and the resulting strategy in a way that best reflects local priorities and concerns and that best engages the interest and commitment of community members. Only by building a vision grounded in locally-based issues and needs can community-wide collaboratives gain the support they need to address the needs of at-risk young people.

KEY STEPS IN BUILDING AN EMPLOYABILITY AGENDA

While the experience of the *New Futures* communities has been varied and often difficult, it has also served as a valuable laboratory for community-wide collaboration and has generated a wealth of experience for other communities to draw on in their efforts to develop comprehensive employability development strategies. Among the more important lessons to be drawn from New Futures is a better understanding of the key steps and major elements in the process of developing any community-wide collaborative effort. Those steps/elements include defining a shared community vision, using information, involving the right people, focusing on strategy, and defining outcomes and accountability.

» **Defining a Shared Vision**

Perhaps the strongest lesson to emerge from the New Futures experience is the importance of clearly defining the problem to be solved and the development of a shared community vision as the first step in any collaborative effort. In simple terms, communities need to agree on what they see as the problem they want to address, what their goals are, and how they want to go about achieving them. While the idea is simple, communities often attempt to bypass this step, skipping the sometimes slow process of examining and debating community needs, identifying resources, and exploring the often conflicting goals and missions of local institutions. The result when that happens is a plan or agreement (a "compact") that lacks the credibility, commitment, and clarity of direction needed to bring about institutional change.

» **Three Views of Employability**

In terms of employability development, the need to develop a common vision and understanding is particularly important. As the New Futures experience made clear, while many of the issues of youth and employability are common across most communities, every community approaches those issues from a slightly different direction. Among the *New Futures* cities, the communities defined the problem they wanted to address in at least three different ways:

» **Focusing on Employment and the Economy**

Some communities -- most notably Savannah -- began by defining the issue of employability in terms of jobs, employability skills, and growth or competitiveness. In those communities, the issue that engaged leaders and residents was that of jobs and growth: *"We need to improve employability development so young people are prepared for jobs and so employers can hire capable workers."* For those communities, the major emphasis of the local strategy was on "compact-like" hiring agreements, defining needed skills, and on substantial business involvement in the schools, especially the high schools.

» **Education and Dropout Prevention**

A second approach -- with Dayton as one example -- focused more heavily on work and employability development as a strategy for improving education and reducing the rate at which students drop out. *"If we are going to keep youngsters in school, we need to help young people see the connection between schooling and 'the real world' (i.e. jobs) and give them the opportunity to learn relevant skills in a practical context. Internships, vocational education programs, applied technology, summer jobs, etc. are tools for educational improvement."* For these communities, employability efforts tend to be tied more clearly to educational reform and more heavily school-based. Here too, there is often a stronger focus on middle-school efforts and higher education as a desired outcome.

» **Youth/Community Development**

A third approach -- evident in both Little Rock and Bridgeport -- focused on work, family and employability as resources in addressing even broader issues of youth and/or community development. In this approach, work and skills development are seen as ways of helping young people build self-esteem, self-confidence, an awareness of their futures, etc., and as such, become integral elements in comprehensive strategies addressing issues such as youth

violence or teenage pregnancy. "If we want young people to grow into healthy, self-sufficient adults and our community to a safe and healthy place to live, we need to give young people a sense of their own capacity and of possible futures." For these communities, employability efforts might tend to focus on the importance of connecting young people to competent, caring adults, hands-on work/internship experiences, the development of clear pathways to work/higher education, and comprehensive support for struggling families.

Two points need to be made here. The first, as suggested early in this paper, is that there is no one "right" way to approach the myriad concerns linked to the issues of youth and employability. For one community, the most effective starting point might be a concern with the local labor market or the schools. For others, the rallying point may be issues of teen parenting or concerns over the community's neighborhoods. For some, several different issues will need to be tied together. What is important is that the ways the issues are framed reflect a real set of local concerns and provide a common language and point of commitment.

The second, and equally important point, is that each of these approaches has implications for who needs to be involved in local efforts, who will be served, the type of service strategy developed, and the kinds of outcomes to be achieved. Here too, it is important to recognize that there is no one "right" approach. Instead, the way in which each community defines the problem it wants to address needs to shape and direct the kind of strategy it pursues.

» The Role of Information

One of the more important tools that can be used in creating a local vision is the development and use of locally-based data. In the *New Futures* cities and elsewhere, communities have begun to find that the use of local (rather than national data) and the involvement of local citizens in data gathering and analysis -- through surveys, neighborhood hearings, focus groups, etc. -- has helped to create a sense of immediacy and ownership of community issues and to focus attention on those issues of greatest local relevance. How well are young people prepared for or connected to jobs in the community? To what extent are youth violence or teenage parenting an issue in *our* community? The pursuit of these kinds of questions, the process of generating information within the community, and open discussion of what this information means locally can provide a powerful engine for the vision-building process.

» *Involving the Right People*

Involving the right people in the process of designing a community strategy is as important as defining a common vision. One of the familiar lessons drawn from the experience of early partnerships like the Boston Compact is the importance of involving key decision makers who have the authority and the "clout" to make commitments and set the agenda for local institutions -- major business leaders, the PIC Chair, the School Board President and Superintendent, etc. This lesson still holds, and it was this idea in large part that led to the emphasis on the oversight collaboratives in the *New Futures* initiative.

But, for many communities, the traditional model of downtown (and top-down) leadership no longer works. On the one hand, for growing numbers of cities, the major businesses are no longer headquartered in town -- they are subsidiaries of large national corporations with decision-making centered elsewhere. Moreover, in many communities, the firms representing traditional leadership are struggling to reduce their workforces, and the major source of job growth are smaller employers. For those communities, a major challenge in developing a youth employability strategy is that of gaining the interest and involvement of new leaders, particularly those in smaller businesses. How, given the limited resources of those smaller firms (and their often negligible investment in training), can communities gain their active involvement in employment and education efforts? There are no simple answers, but this is clearly a growing concern.

At the same time, as their initiatives developed, virtually all of the *New Futures* communities began moving towards increased parental and neighborhood involvement. Here, too, is a constituency largely ignored in early partnership efforts. But as the *New Futures* cities found, parents are a constituency that clearly have a stake in the outcomes of any community-wide effort, can provide information and an avenue into the community otherwise unavailable to the "downtown" leadership, and who represent a vital political resource for promoting institutional change.²³

The lessons concerning "involving the right people," then, operate on several levels. The first is the well-recognized need to involve the key institutional representatives and the leaders who can bring a degree of political and policy clout. But the second is that in most communities successful implementation also means broadening the net somewhat and involving new, "nontraditional" representatives of the business community, parents, and others (school building administrators and teachers, for example) who can help make the connection between the traditional leadership and the community at large.

²³ Bridgeport was particularly active in involving parents in the *New Futures* process and established a training program for parents serving as collaborative members as part of the Bridgeport initiative.

» **Focus on Strategies First**

A third major lesson is to focus on strategies first, then programs. Too often, community planning efforts become bogged down in developing a single program or sponsoring a group of activities and fail to look more broadly at the range of needs within the community and mix of resources available to address them. While it is often critical for community-wide efforts to start with a single initiative which can then grow (as a way of learning to work together), it is essential that even early initiatives be clearly cast as part of a long-range strategy, with clear plans for moving from pilot site to community-wide effort and from program implementation to policy reform. One useful step in focusing on strategies is the development of a local resource map that identifies major target groups and/or needs and begins to map out the various resource streams within the community that are available to address them.

» **Defining Outcomes and Accountability**

The complement to defining a vision is the need to also define clear outcomes and accountability. One of the ways in which community-wide strategies stumble is in failing to agree on firm roles and responsibilities and on how those commitments will be measured.

Among the *New Futures* sites there was widespread agreement that the development of effective goals and standards for accountability was one of the harder tasks they faced. In part, this reflects the difficulty of implementing agreements among relatively decentralized groups of institutions. (In reality, the "business community" rarely speaks and works as one; similarly resources and authority are often widely dispersed within local school systems.)

But the difficulty in developing real accountability also reflects the problem of defining goals that are an appropriate basis for accountability. As most of the *New Futures* communities found, there needs to be a balance between the broad, overarching goals driving the local strategy -- reduction in the dropout rate, teenage parenting, youth unemployment or inactivity, etc -- and more readily reachable interim goals. In the words of one *New Futures* participant, the problems need to be defined in "solvable" terms, and the goals and objectives need to be defined in ways that will help to measure progress as well as the ultimate impact of the initiative.

Finally, however communities define their goals and accountability, they need to build in an ongoing evaluation process. As the *New Futures* representatives pointed out, evaluation can be a double-edged sword -- occasionally looking to measure outcomes before they can reasonably be expected to appear. But an ongoing evaluation process does provide the tools and information needed to enforce accountability and to maintain a degree of perspective on what are often complex, long-term initiatives.

LESSONS FOR COMMUNITY-WIDE INITIATIVES

Beyond the specific lessons concerning the elements and steps involved in developing a community-wide collaborative, the New Futures experience also offers some broader lessons on the issues involved in community-wide, collaborative initiatives. Taken together, these lessons reinforce the importance of leadership, commitment, and an understanding of the kinds of issues involved in building a community-wide employability strategy.

» The "Political" Character of Collaboration

As suggested at the beginning of this paper, one of the major lessons to emerge from the examination of *New Futures* was the essentially *political* nature of the process of developing a community-wide strategy. A collaborative strategy is political not in the sense of partisan politics or trading favors, but in the sense that it involves bringing together and negotiating often competing public and private interests in the community; in that it involves fundamental public policy decisions; and political in the critical role played by the process of involving key members of the community.²⁴ In every *New Futures* community, schools, businesses, the employment and training system and others were being asked to change the ways in which they planned programs, shared information, and allocated resources in working with at-risk youth. For that to happen, communities needed to do more than simply follow the steps outlined in some program guide. They needed to think creatively about how to address very fundamental issues, how to engage the interest and support of key leaders, and how to bring the community together around a common idea. Where problems occurred (and they were common), they were rarely "technical" (such as conflicting regulations). More often than not, the real barriers resulted from a failure to think strategically about the politics of collaboration -- a failure to secure real agreement or to involve a critical party in the negotiations.

The "political" nature of the process results, in part, from the fact that the issues of youth and employability often raised very basic issues of public policy and community values. In defining who would be served in a comprehensive system or what criteria would be used in determining employability, the *New Futures* communities often had to address fundamental policy issues concerning community attitudes, goals and governance. In several of the *New Futures* communities, for example, the question of youth employment was closely tied to the perceived racism of the business community -- business complaints about the poor skills of high school graduates were perceived as an excuse to avoid hiring minority youth. The development of a set of mutually acceptable criteria for hiring meant working through those issues before agreement could be reached. Similarly, questions about who should be

²⁴ In many ways, building a community-wide agenda is not only a *political* process, but also a *personal* one. In large part, questions of commitment, shared vision, turf, the willingness to change (that is, the heart of the political agenda) depend on the nurturing of positive, trusting relationships among the key actors. Successful political strategies, at least in part, are those that recognize the value of establishing and supporting those relationships.

involved in the planning process raised serious issues about local governance and control of decision-making. Every community grappled with the trade-offs between oversight collaboratives or policy forums that were designed to bring together only local power brokers and those that provided a substantial role for parents and neighborhood leaders. The question of "who should be involved" raises difficult issues of inclusiveness, ownership, and top-down versus bottom-up decision-making. Finally, in defining the goals of their employability efforts, communities often had to mediate between conflicting philosophies. Was the purpose of the "compact" to develop good workers, or to help young people stay in school and develop their "full potential." Was the focus a "narrow vocationalism" or a broader effort towards "self-sufficiency." At issue here were fundamental values and beliefs about the community's youth, education, and the role of business in local affairs.

These types of issues form the core of any effort to establish a community-wide strategy, because they define many of the basic attitudes and policy parameters that will guide the policy decisions and program designs that make up the local effort. Failure to resolve them -- as well as the more familiar and frustrating issues of turf and the fight for scarce resources -- almost guarantees failure of any collaborative effort. At the same time, the issues are neither simple nor easily resolved. In order to succeed at any comprehensive, community-wide strategy, communities need to recognize and address the "politics" as well as the "technology" in their effort and to build the political support needed to make change take place.

» *The Importance of Leadership*

The political nature of the process of building a community-wide strategy, in turn, puts a premium on community leadership that is willing to take risks and to make a long term commitment. One of the clearest lessons to emerge from all five *New Futures* cities was the need to find a "champion" -- one or more leaders who see the need for a community-wide strategy and are willing to take an active and aggressive leadership role.²⁵ That champion (or those leaders) needs to be willing to confront difficult issues (people often spoke about the need to "call the question") and to take risks in moving the employability agenda forward. At the same time, the leadership in this type of effort also needs to be able to think strategically in terms of involving others and shaping the discussion so that it leads to resolution and not just to confrontation.

²⁵ One of the founders of the Boston Compact often spoke in similar terms in calling for a "passionate advocate" to take the lead in community efforts.

» *Patience and Commitment*

Given the seriousness of the issues that often need to be addressed, patience and a commitment to the long-term are also critical. In each of the *New Futures* communities, much of the early process has been devoted (in some cases deliberately, in others not) to developing the relationships, understanding, and trust needed to begin the real work of building a community agenda. In almost every *New Futures* discussion, participants pointed to the need to learn one another's language, understand differing personal and institutional goals and missions, and build a body of experience together to work from. In most cases, they also pointed to substantial conflicts along the way.

This "trust building" process is a familiar feature of any collaborative effort, and partnerships across the country have found there are no easy shortcuts. There is a substantial payoff to this process in the view of the *New Futures* participants -- in a very new and different understanding of the community's needs and resources, and a new level of trust among key actors. But it is a process that is often painful and frustrating to go through, and participants often drop off along the way. Communities need to understand in advance, once again, that the development of a collaborative vision and strategy will take time and that there will be many bumps along the way.

» *No Magic Bullet*

The nature of the issues involved, and the need to work together to build a common sense of vision and trust lead clearly to the third major lesson -- the difficulty of replicating this type of community-wide initiative. While there are clearly a number of broad lessons and helpful hints for leaders and policy makers to follow in their own efforts, there are no simple road maps to follow. Recognizing that every community needs to define its own starting point and build its own coalitions, the most fundamental lesson is that the development of a community-wide strategy is an intensely local phenomenon, and the most effective manner of proceeding is by paying serious attention to the needs, resources, and relationships in each particular community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Many of the lessons from *New Futures* are aimed at local policy makers and point to the need for local leaders to look at the process by which a community-wide strategy is built. To successfully take on that type of effort, local policy makers need to be prepared to confront serious and often difficult issues ranging from turf to fundamental questions of educational and social policy. They need to look at how they can raise awareness of local issues (for example by using local information); involve and build ownership among a widespread set of constituencies; negotiate agreement on a well-defined common vision; set standards for accountability, and evaluate the results of their efforts.

But the lessons outlined here also suggest ways that state and national policy-makers can also foster the development of community-wide strategies. States and the federal government can support this local process by working to raise the awareness of local leaders of the issues of employability -- through public informational campaigns; by helping to develop sources of locally-based information; and by working directly with or providing technical assistance to local policy bodies to help them understand and frame the local debate.

State and national government can also provide incentives for collaborative efforts at the local level. One strategy is to provide incentives for collaboration through grant guidelines, jointly funded programs, performance standards, and other financial and regulatory methods. A second approach might be to create new collaborative situations aimed at encouraging communications across institutional lines at a variety of levels. In this instance, jointly sponsored meetings of administrators (bringing education, human service, and employment administrators together), joint training sessions for line staff, or multi-institutional conferences might all be used as ways of bridging the gaps among youth-serving institutions.

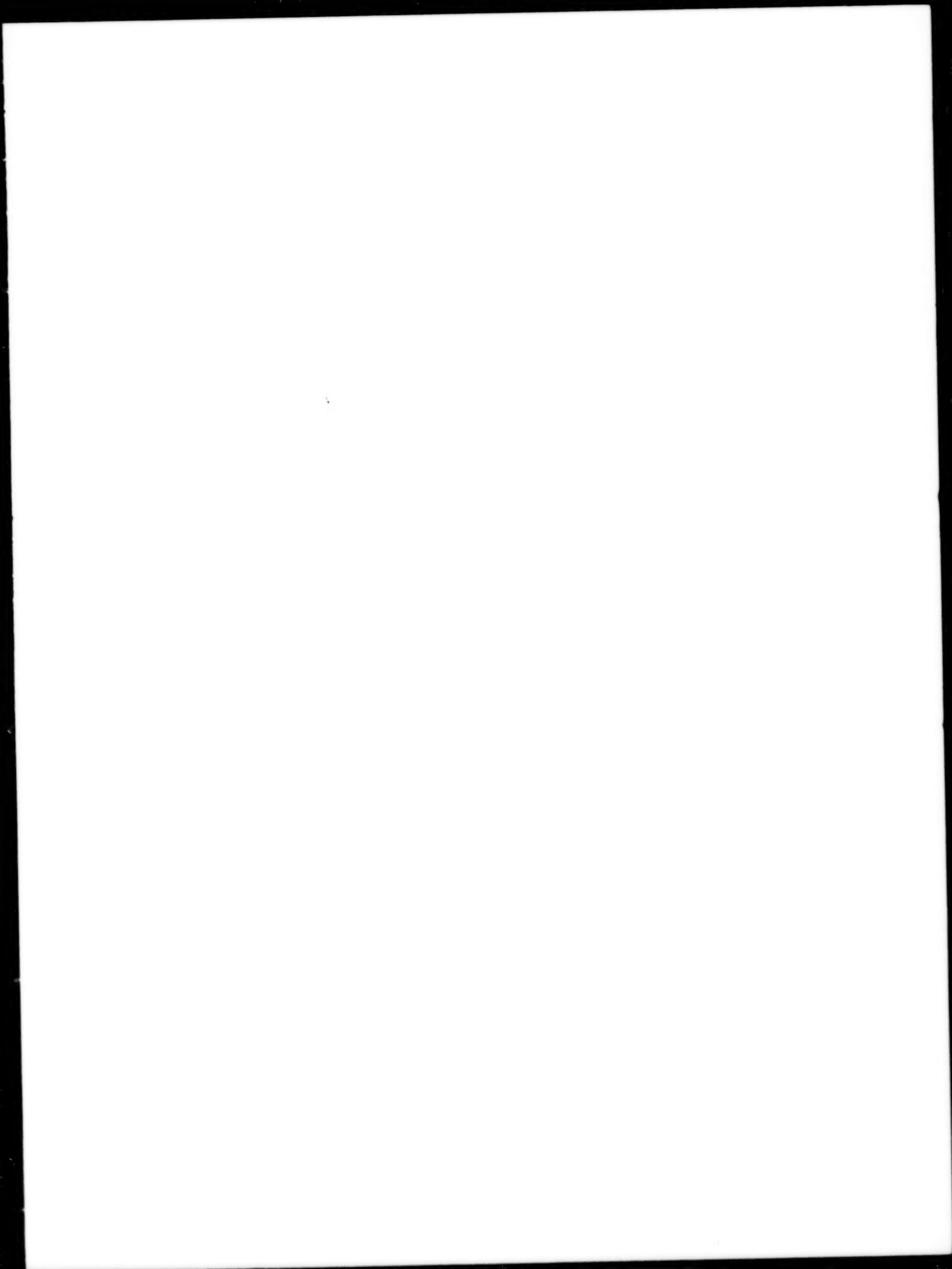
States can also provide direct assistance with the collaborative process through the provision of technical assistance and outside facilitators to help communities work through local collaboration issues. As the representatives of one *New Futures* city noted, the availability of an outside facilitator was a critical factor in their ability to put difficult issues on the table and deal with them productively.

Finally, for policy makers at every level, one of the major issues is that of time. In supporting collaborative efforts, policy makers at every level need to be "aggressively patient" -- pushing hard for progress, but recognizing that these collaboratives cannot be built over time. At each level, policy makers need to begin to look at the development of a community-wide youth employability strategy as a long-term, multi-year venture and to begin to design policies (such as multi-year funding strategies), that support the growth of long-term relationships among institutions and that make it possible to invest funds in community-wide initiatives over a substantial period of time.

GENERIC ELEMENTS OF EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Given an almost inexhaustible store of partnership examples and their range of possible impacts on a system or across system one might reasonably ask if there is an overall "set" of elements which make educational partnerships effective. Though multi-institutional partnerships vary, much of the partnerships literature has highlighted generic characteristics, those specifics of structure and development which seem to contribute to success. The following checklist is culled from this literature. The listing below can be used as a guide to what constitutes a successful partnership.

CHECKLIST	ELEMENTS OF EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
	Top Level Leadership
	Grounding in Community Needs
	Effective Public Relations
	Clear Roles and Responsibilities
	Racial/Ethnic Involvement
	Strategic Planning
	Effective Management and Staffing Structure
	Shared Decision-Making/Interagency Ownership
	Shared Credit/Recognition
	Appropriate, Well-Timed Resources
	Technical Assistance
	Formal Agreements
	Action and Frequent Success
	Patience/Vigilance Increased Involvement
	Other:



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